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LIFE OF WILLIAM PITT

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Emery Walker Ph. sc.

William Pitt
as Chancellor of the Exchequer
from a painting by T. Gainsborough

LIFE OF
WILLIAM PITT

BY

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OF CAMBRIDGE; HON. LITT.D., UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER;
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AMHERST COLLEGE (MASS.)

> "A rarer spirit never
> Did steer humanity, but you, gods, will give us
> Some faults to make us men."
> Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra.*

PART I

WILLIAM PITT AND NATIONAL REVIVAL

PART II

WILLIAM PITT AND THE GREAT WAR

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PREFACE

THE present edition compresses into one volume the whole of the text, notes, and indexes of the two volumes entitled "William Pitt and National Revival" and "William Pitt and the Great War," which were published at short intervals in the year 1911. No alteration has been made except in the *format*.

It seems unnecessary, however, to reproduce the two Prefaces, which not only enumerated the many new sources utilized in the preparation of those volumes, but also outlined the characteristics of the two nearly equal periods into which the public career of Pitt naturally falls. The earlier and less exciting half is remarkable for remedial and constructive efforts which have never been excelled except in the Victorian age. The latter half brought him into collision with strange and unexpectedly potent forces, incarnate finally in the greatest genius of the modern world. Pitt did not excel in the wiles of diplomacy—his contest with Catharine II proved that—and he was still less fitted to cope with the complex problems of a great Continental War. Nevertheless, after the lapse of twelve years, I hold to the judgment, expressed in 1911, that his career is to be judged, not by the failures which bulk so large on the surface, but rather by the energy and fortitude which he breathed into his successors and into the nation at large. As I then wrote—"The victor in the Great War was not Napoleon but Pitt."[1]

J. H. R.

CAMBRIDGE,
March 1923.

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[1] Several new letters of George III, Pitt, Grenville, Windham, Burke, Canning, etc., which could only be referred to in this work, were published in a volume entitled "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters," containing also historical enquiries and notes (George Bell and Sons, 1912).

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ABBREVIATIONS OF THE TITLES OF THE CHIEF WORKS REFERRED TO IN THIS VOLUME

Ann. Reg. = "Annual Register."

Ashbourne = "Pitt: some Chapters of his Life and Times," by the Rt. Hon. Lord Ashbourne. 1898.

Auckland Journals = "The Journal and Corresp. of William, Lord Auckland." 4 vols. 1861.

Beaufort P. = "MSS. of the Duke of Beaufort," etc. (Hist. MSS. Comm.). 1891.

B.M. Add. MSS. = Additional Manuscripts of the British Museum.

Buckingham P. = "Mems. of the Court and Cabinets of George III," by the Duke of Buckingham. 2 vols. 1853.

Campbell = "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," by Lord Campbell. 8 vols. 1845-69.

Castlereagh Corresp. = "Mems. and Corresp. of Viscount Castlereagh." 8 vols. 1848-53.

Chevening MSS. = Manuscripts of Earl Stanhope, preserved at Chevening.

Cunningham = "Growth of Eng. Industry and Commerce (Modern Times)," by Dr. W. Cunningham. 1892.

Dropmore P. = "The Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., preserved at Dropmore" (Hist. MSS. Comm.). 7 vols. 1892-1910.

Fortescue = "The History of the British Army," by the Hon. J. W. Fortescue. vol. iv.

Häusser = "Deutsche Geschichte (1786-1804)," by L. Häusser. 4 vols. 1861-3.

Holland = "Memoirs of the Whig Party," by Lord Holland. 2 vols. 1852.

Jesse = "Mems. of the Life and Reign of George III," by J. H. Jesse. 3 vols. 1867.

Lecky = "Hist. of England in the Eighteenth Century," by W. E. H. Lecky. 8 vols. Fifth edit. 1891-1904.

Leeds Mem. = "Political Memoranda of Francis, Fifth Duke of Leeds," ed. by Mr. O. Browning. 1884.

LUCKWALDT = "Die englisch-preussische Allianz von 1788," von F. Luckwaldt. 1902.

MALMESBURY DIARIES = "Diaries and Corresp. of the First Earl of Malmesbury." 4 vols. 1844.

PARL. HIST. = "History of the Parliamentary Debates" (after 1804 continued in Hansard).

PELLEW = "Life and Corresp. of the first Viscount Sidmouth," by Rev. C. Pellew. 3 vols. 1847.

PITT MSS. = Pitt MSS., preserved at H.M. Public Record Office.

PITT-RUTLAND CORRESP. = "Corresp. between . . . W. Pitt and the Duke of Rutland." 1890.

PORRITT = "The Unreformed House of Commons," by E. Porritt. 2 vols. 1909.

PRETYMAN MSS. = MSS. of E. G. Pretyman, Esq., M.P., preserved at Orwell Park.

ROSE, G., "DIARIES" = "Diaries and Corresp. of Rt. Hon. G. Rose." 2 vols. 1860.

ROSE, "NAPOLEON" = "Life of Napoleon," by J. H. Rose. 2 vols. 1909.

ROSE, "THIRD COALITION" = "Select Despatches . . . relating to the Formation of the Third Coalition (1804-5)," ed. by J. H. Rose (Royal Historical Soc., 1904).

RUTLAND P. = "MSS. of the Duke of Rutland" (Hist. MSS. Comm.). 3 vols. 1894.

RUVILLE = "William Pitt, Earl of Chatham," by A. von Ruville (Eng. transl.). 3 vols. 1907.

SOREL = "L'Europe et la Révolution française," par A. Sorel. Pts. II, III. 1889, 1897.

STANHOPE = "Life of . . . William Pitt," by Earl Stanhope. 4 vols. 3rd edition. 1867.

SYBEL = "Geschichte der Revolutionzeit (1789-1800)," von H. von Sybel. Eng. translation. 4 vols. 1867-9.

VIVENOT = "Quellen zur Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserpolitik Œsterreichs . . ." von A. von Vivenot. 1873.

WITTICHEN = "Preussen und England in der europäischen Politik 1785-8," von F. K. Wittichen. 1902.

WRAXALL = "Memoirs of Sir N. W. Wraxall" (1772-84), edited by H. B. Wheatley. 5 vols. 1884.

PART I

WILLIAM PITT AND NATIONAL REVIVAL

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF WILLIAM PITT

INTRODUCTION

ENGLAND AT THE CLOSE OF THE AMERICAN WAR (1780-3)

> I think it proper before I commence my proposed work to pass under review the condition of the capital, the temper of the armies, the attitude of the provinces, and the elements of weakness and strength which existed throughout the whole Empire, so that we may become conversant, not only with the vicissitudes and issues of events, which are often matters of chance, but also with their relations and causes.—TACITUS, *The History*, bk. i, ch. iv.

IN the course of the session of 1782, when the American War was dragging to its disastrous close and a change of Ministers was imminent, one of the youngest members of the House of Commons declared that he would accept no subordinate office in a new administration. At the close of 1783, during a crisis of singular intensity, he became Chief Minister of the Crown, and thenceforth, with one short interval, controlled the destinies of Great Britain through twenty-two years marked by grave complications, both political and financial, social and diplomatic, ending in wars of unexampled magnitude. Early in the year 1806 he died of exhaustion, at the age of forty-seven. In these bald statements we may sum up the outstanding events of the life of William Pitt the Younger, which it is my aim to describe somewhat in detail.

Before reviewing his antecedents and the course of his early life, I propose to give some account of English affairs in the years when he entered on his career, so that we may picture him in his surroundings, realize the nature of the difficulties that beset him, and, as it were, feel our way along some of the myriad filaments which connect an individual with the collective activities of his age.

William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, died in 1778. His second son, named after him, began his political career at the close of the year 1780, when he was elected Member of Parliament for Appleby. The decade which then began marks a turning point in British history. Then for the first time the old self-contained life was shaken to its depths by forces of unsuspected power. Democracy, Athene-like, sprang to maturity in the New World, and threatened the stability of thrones in the Old World. For while this militant creed won its first triumphs over the soldiery of George III, it began also to colour the thoughts and wing the aspirations of the masses, especially in France, so that, even if the troops of Washington had been vanquished, the rising tide of thought would none the less have swept away the outworn barriers of class. The march of armies may be stayed; that of thought never.

The speculations enshrined in the "Social Contract" of Rousseau and the teachings of the Encyclopaedists contained much that was crude, or even false. Nevertheless, they gave an impulse such as no age ever had known, and none perhaps ever will know again. The course of the American War of Independence and the foundation of a State based on distinctly democratic principles proved that the new doctrines might lead to very practical results. The young giant now stood rooted in mother-earth.

Side by side with this portent in the world of thought and politics there came about another change. Other centuries have witnessed experiments in the direction of democracy; but in none have social speculations and their results been so closely accompanied by mechanical inventions of wonder-working potency. Here we touch on the special characteristics of the modern world. It is the product of two Revolutions, one political, the other mechanical. The two movements began and developed side by side. In 1762 Rousseau gave to the world his "Contrat Social," the Bible of the French Revolutionists; while only two years later Hargreaves, a weaver of Blackburn, produced his spinning-jenny. In 1769 Arkwright patented his spinning-frame, and Watt patented his separate condenser. The year 1776 is memorable alike for the American Declaration of

Independence, and for the publication of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations." In 1779 the Lancashire weaver, Crompton, produced his "mule-jenny," a vast improvement on the machines of Arkwright and Hargreaves. The year 1785 witnessed not only the Diamond-Necklace scandal, so fatal to the prestige of the French monarchy, but also the patenting of Watt's double-acting steam-engine and Cartwright's "power loom." In the year 1789, which sounded the knell of the old order of things on the Continent, there appeared the first example of the modern factory, spinning-machinery being then driven by steam power in Manchester. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, when the democratic movement had for the time gone astray and spent its force, the triumphs of science and industry continued peacefully to revolutionize human life. In 1803, the year of the renewal of war with France, William Radcliffe of Stockport greatly increased the efficiency of the power loom, and thereby cheapened the production of cloth. Finally, the year 1814 ought to be remembered, not only for the first abdication of Napoleon, but also for that peaceful and wholly beneficent triumph, George Stephenson's "No. 1," Killingworth locomotive.[1]

The list might be extended far beyond the limits of the period treated in this work, but enough has been said to show that the democratic and industrial forces closely synchronized at the outset, and that while the former waned the latter waxed more and more, proving in the years 1830-2 the most potent ally of English reformers in efforts which Pitt and his friends had failed to carry through in the years 1780-5. So intimate an interaction of new and potent forces had never been seen in the history of man. In truth no one but a sciolist will venture to ascribe the problems of the present age solely to the political movement which found its most powerful expression in the French Revolution. Only those can read aright the riddle of the modern sphinx who have ears for both her tones, who hearken not only to the shouts of leaders and the roar of mobs, but also listen for the multitudinous hum of the workshop, the factory, and the mine.

The lot of William Pitt the Younger was cast in the years when both these revolutions began their mighty work. The active part of his father's career fell within the old order of things; the problems which confronted Chatham were merely political. They therefore presented none of that complexity which so often baffled the penetration and forethought of his son. It is true that, with a prophetic vision of the future, the old man foretold in thrilling words the invincibility of the American cause, but then his life-work was done; from his Pisgah-mount he could only warn, and vainly warn, the dwellers in the plain below. His son was destined to enter that unknown land; and he entered it when his people were burdened by debt, disaster, and disgrace.

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[1] Baines, "Hist. of Cotton Manufacture," 226, 232-4. See Mr. G. P Gooch's "Politics and Culture," for other coincidences.

What were the material resources of the nation? Were they equal to the strain imposed by a disastrous war? Could they resist the subtly warping influences of the coming age? The questions closely concern us in our present inquiry. For the greatness of a statesman is not to be assessed merely by an enumeration of his legislative, diplomatic, and warlike successes. There is a truer method of valuation than this haphazard avoirdupois. It consists in weighing his achievements against his difficulties.

It is well, therefore, to remember that the British people of the year 1780 was a small and poor people, if we compare it not merely with modern standards (a method fallacious for the present inquiry), but with the burdens which it had to bear. The population of England and Wales at that time has been computed a little over 7,800,000; that of Scotland was perhaps about 1,400,000. That of Ireland is even less known. The increase of population in England and Wales during the years 1770-80 exceeded eight per cent., a rate less, indeed, than that of the previous decade, which had been one of abounding prosperity, but surpassing that of any previous period for which credible estimates can be framed.[1]

The wealth of the nation seems also to have suffered little decline; and after the conclusion of peace in 1783 it showed a surprising elasticity owing to causes which will soon be considered.

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[1] The first trustworthy statistics of population were obtained in the census of 1801; but those given above are probably not very wide of the mark. The estimates are those of Rickman, quoted by Porter, "Progress of the Nation," 13. The estimate of the "Statistical Journal" (xliii, 462), quoted by Dr. Cunningham, "Eng. Industry and Commerce," 699, is 7,953,000 for the year 1780.

But in the years 1780-3 there was a universal conviction that the burden of debt and taxation was unendurable. Parliament in 1781 voted the enormous sum of £25,353,857 for Ways and Means, an increase of £814,060 on the previous year. As the finances and debt of Ireland were kept entirely separate up to the end of the century, this burden fell upon some 9,200,000 persons, and involved a payment of about £2 15*s.* per head, an amount then deemed absolutely crushing.

But two important facts should be remembered: firstly, that the investments of British capital in oversea undertakings, which are now enormous, were (apart from the British East and West Indies) practically non-existent in the year 1780, Great Britain being then an almost self-sufficing unit financially; secondly, that modern methods of taxation are less expensive in the collection and less burdensome to the taxpayer than those prevalent in that non-scientific era. The revenue of 1781 included the following items: £12,480,000 for "Annuities and Lottery," £2,788,000 for "Certain Surpluses of the Sinking Fund," £2,000,000 Bank Charter, and so on. Only about one fourth of the requisite amount was raised by means that would now be considered sound.[1]

The National Debt was then reckoned at £177,206,000; and the annual interest, amounting to £6,812,000, ate up considerably more than one fourth of the "bloated estimates" of that year. The burden of debt seemed appalling to that generation; and the Three per cent. Consols sank from 60¼ in January 1781 to 55 in November. But further blows were soon to be dealt by Ministers at the nation's credit; and the same stock ranged between 56 and 58 when William Pitt became Prime Minister in December 1783. Predictions of national bankruptcy were freely indulged in; and it should be remembered that Great Britain, vanquished by a mighty Coalition and bereft of her most valuable colonies, seemed far more likely to sink into the gulf of bankruptcy than triumphant France. The events of the next six years turned essentially on the management of the finances of the rival Powers by Pitt and by the Controllers-General of Versailles. Apart from the personal questions at issue, the history of that time affords the most instructive proof that victory may bear within itself the seeds of future disease and collapse;

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[1] See Walter's "Origin of Commerce," iv, 401, for a full statement of this juggling with the nation's finance.

while a wise use of the lessons of adversity may lead the vanquished to a lease of healthier life.

If we turn our gaze away from the material resources of Great Britain to the institutions and sentiments of our forefathers, there will appear many bizarre contrasts and perplexing symptoms. At first sight the self-contained, unreceptive, torpid society of the Georgian era might appear to be wholly unfitted to bear the triple strain of a serious national disaster, and of the warping influences of the new democracy and the new industrialism. The situation was indeed most alarming: "What a dismal fragment of an Empire!" wrote Horace Walpole in June 1780, "Yet would that moment were come when we are to take a survey of our ruins." In truth, had the majority of Britons been addicted to morbidly introspective broodings, they would have been undone. There are times when a nation is saved by sheer stolidity; and this characteristic alike in monarch and people, which was responsible for the prolongation of the war, helped to avert collapse at its close. The course of the narrative will show that the brains of Englishmen were far from equal to the task of facing the problems of the age then dawning; but Englishmen were equal to the task of bearing the war-burdens manfully, and thus were able to supply the material out of which Pitt, aided by the new manufacturing forces, could work financial marvels.

Then again, British institutions offered that happy mixture of firmness and adaptability which at many crises has been the salvation of the race. Had they been as rigid as those of Sparta they must have cracked and fallen asunder; had they been as fluid as those of Athens they might have mouldered away. But, like the structure of English society of which they form the framework, they lend themselves to reverent restoration, and thwart all efforts at reckless innovation. Sir Henry Maine happily assessed the worth of this truly national safeguard in the statement that our institutions had, however undesignedly, arrived at a state in which satisfaction and impatience, the chief sources of political conduct, were adequately called into play. Of this self-adjusting process Pitt, at least during the best years of his career, was to be the sage director.

There were many reasons why Englishmen should be a prey alternately to feelings of satisfaction and discontent. Instinct and tradition bade them be loyal to the throne and to the institutions of their fathers. Reason and reflection bade them censure the war policy of George III and the means whereby he sought to carry it through to the bitter end. St. Stephen's, Westminster, had been the shrine of the nation's liberties; it now, so Burke declared, threatened them with a slow and inglorious extinction. Obedience to the laws had ever been the pride of the nation; but now that virtue might involve subservience to a corrupt and greedy faction.

Yet however great the provocations, Britons were minded to right these wrongs in their own way, and not after the fashions set at Geneva or Paris. In truth they had one great advantage denied to Continental reformers. At Paris reform almost necessarily implied innovation; for, despite the dictum of Burke to the contrary, it is safe to say that the relics of the old constitution of France offered no adequate basis on which to reconstruct her social and political fabric. In England the foundations and the walls were in good repair. The structure needed merely extension, not rebuilding. Moreover, British reformers were by nature and tradition inclined towards tentative methods and rejected wholesale schemes. Even in the dull years of George II the desire for a Reform of Parliament was not wholly without expression; and now, at the time of the American War, the desire became a demand, which nearly achieved success. In fact, the Reform programme of 1780 satisfied the aspirations of the more moderate men, even in the years 1791-4, when the excitements of the French Revolution, and the writings of Thomas Paine for a time popularized the levelling theories then in vogue at Paris.

Certainly, before the outbreak of the French Revolution, the writings of Continental thinkers had little vogue in Great Britain. The "Social Contract" of Rousseau was not widely known, and its most noteworthy theses, despite the fact that they were borrowed from Hobbes and Locke, aroused no thrill of sympathy. This curious fact may be explained by the innate repugnance of the islanders alike to the rigidly symmetrical form in which the Genevese prophet clothed his dogmas, and to the Jacobins' claim for them of universal applicability. The very qualities which carried conviction to the ardent and logic-loving French awakened doubts among the cooler northern folk.

Then again, however sharp might be the resentment against George III for this or that action, national sentiment ran strongly in the traditional channels. After the collapse of the Stuart cause loyalty to the throne and to the dynasty was the dominant feeling among all classes. As Burke finely said of the Tories after the accession of George III, "they changed their idol but they preserved their idolatry." The personality of George III was such as to help on this transformation. A certain *bonhomie*, as of an English squire, set off by charm of manner and graciousness of speech,[1] none too common in that class, went to the hearts of all who remembered the outlandish ways of the first two Georges. Furthermore, his morals were distinctly more reputable than theirs, as was seen at the time of his youth, when he withstood the wiles strewn in his path by several ladies of the Court with a frankness worthy of the Restoration times.[2] His good sense, straightforwardness, and his love of country life and of farming endeared him both to the masses of the people and to the more select circles which began to learn from Versailles the cult of Rousseau and the charms of butter making. Queen Charlotte, a princess of the House of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, also set her face against vice and extravagance, but in a primly austere manner which won few to the cause of virtue. Domesticity in her ceased to be alluring. Idle tongues wagged against her even when she sought to encourage the wearing of dresses woven in Spitalfields rather than those of ever-fashionable Paris; or again, when she prohibited the wearing of ostrich feathers at Court.[3]

The reader will fail to understand the political life of that time and the difficulties often besetting Pitt until he grasps the fact that George III not only reigned but governed. His long contest with the Whig factions left him victor; and it is singular that the shortsightedness of the elder Pitt signally aided the King in breaking up their power. Both of them aimed at overthrowing the supremacy of the old Whig families, but it was George III who profited by the efforts of the Earl of Chatham.[4] The result was seen in the twelve years of almost personal rule (1770-82), during which Lord North and the well-fed phalanx of the King's Friends bade fair to make the House of Commons the mere instrument of the royal will. The King's influence, impaired for a time by the disasters of the American War, asserted itself again at the time of the Lord George Gordon Riots in June 1780. That outbreak of bigotry and rascality for a time paralyzed with fear both Ministers and magistrates; but while all around him faltered, George III held firm and compelled the authorities to act.[1] The riots were quelled, but not before hundreds of drunken desperadoes had perished in the flames which they had kindled. Those who saw large parts of London ablaze long retained a feeling of horror at all popular movements, and looked upon George III as the saviour of society. This it was, in part, which enabled him to retain his influence scarcely impaired even by the disasters of the American War. The monarchy stood more firmly rooted than at any time since the reign of Queen Anne. Jacobitism survived among a few antiquated Tories, like Dr. Johnson, as a pious belief or a fashionable affectation; but even in the year 1763 the lexicographer, after receiving a pension from George III, avowed to Boswell that the pleasure of cursing the House of Hanover and of drinking King James's health was amply overbalanced by an income of three hundred pounds.

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[1] "Diary of a Journey to England (1761-62)," by Count F. von Kielmansegge," 237.

[2] "The Coltness Collections," 116, quoted by J. H. Jesse; "Memoirs of the Reign of George III," i, 29.

[3] "Mems. of Queen Charlotte," by J. Watkins, 1819, pt. i, ch. x. The Duchess of Devonshire had flaunted a head-plume of an ell and three inches.

[4] See an excellent study, "Personal and Party Government (1760-1766)," by Mr. D. A. Winstanley, 1910.

As a sign of the reality of the royal power, we may note that public affairs were nearly at a stand-still at the time of the lunacy of George III (November 1788 to February 1789). The following Foreign Office despatch, sent to the British Ambassador at Berlin at a critical time in our diplomatic relations, shows that Pitt and the Foreign Secretary, the Marquis of Carmarthen, considered themselves the King's Secretaries of State, and unable to move until the royal will was known:

Whitehall, January 6 1789.

To Mr. Ewart,

Sir,

I have received your letters up to No. 93, but I have not any commands to convey to you at present, the unhappy situation of His Majesty's health making it impossible for me to lay them before him. The present situation of this country renders it impossible for me to send you any particular or precise instructions. I trust, however, that the system for supplying the present unfortunate interruption in the executive part of the Government will be speedily completed, at least with as little delay as the importance of the object will admit of, and which, being once more formed, will of course restore that part of the Constitution to its usual energy and effect.[1]

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[1] "Corresp. of George III with Lord North," ii, 323; Wraxall, i, 347.

Ewart and our other ambassadors were therefore urged to mark time as energetically as might be; and no orders were sent to them until after 17th February 1789, when the King began to recover.

At ordinary times, then, the King's authority was looked upon as essential to the working of the Government, a fact which explains the eager interest, even of men not place-hunters, in the Regency disputes of 1788-9. In truth, the monarchy was the central fact of the nation's life; and, as it acquired stedfastness from the personal popularity of George III, the whole of the edifice had a solidity unknown in the years 1680-1760.[2]

Montesquieu praised the English constitution as providing without undue friction a balance of power between King, Lords, and Commons. This judgment (penned in 1748) still held good, though the royal authority had in the meantime certainly increased. But the power of the nobles was still very great. They largely controlled the House of Commons. The Lowthers secured the election of 11 Members in the Lake District; and through the whole country 71 Peers were able directly to nominate, and secure the election of, 88 commoners, while they powerfully influenced the return of 72 more. If we include all landowners, whether titled on untitled, it appears that they had the power to nominate 487 members out of the 658 who formed the House of Commons.

In these days, when the thought and activities of the towns overbear those of the country districts, we cry out against a system that designedly placed power in the hands of nobles and squires. But we must remember that the country then far outweighed the towns in importance; that the produce of the soil was far more valuable than all the manufactures; and that stability and stolidity are the characteristics of an ancient society, based on agriculture and reared in Feudalism. If we except that metropolitan orgy, the Wilkes' affair, London and Westminster were nearly as torpid politically as Dorset. Even in the year

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 15, Carmarthen to Ewart, 6th January 1789.

[2] For the influence exerted by George III on elections see Porritt, "The Unreformed House of Commons," i, 409-15.

1791 the populace of Manchester and Birmingham blatantly exulted in a constitution which left them without any direct voice in Parliament. It was in the nature of things that Grampound, Old Sarum, Gatton, and Castle Rising should return eight members; the choice of the Tudor Sovereigns had lit upon those hamlets or villages as test-places for consulting the will of the nation, and the nation acquiesced, because, even if Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Sheffield had enjoyed that privilege, they would probably have sent up country gentlemen of the same type, and after a far greater output of money and beer. Where the will of the nation is almost entirely homogeneous there is no injustice in selecting representatives by the haphazard methods then in use.

Strong in their control of Parliament, the nobles sought to hem in the throne by meshes of influence through which even the masterful and pertinacious George III could with difficulty break. Their circle was small. True, they had failed in their effort of 1719 to limit the number of creations at any one time to six; but jealousy had almost the force of law. Ultimately we find George III declining to confer a dukedom on any but princes of the blood, and Pitt incurred the displeasure of his cousin, Earl Temple, because he failed to bend the royal will on that question. The need of caution in respect to the granting of titles may be inferred from the Pitt Papers, no small part of which refer to requests for these honours. Pitt has been reproached with his lavish use of this governmental device, for he created about 140 peerages in the years 1783-1801. I have, however, found proofs that he used it reluctantly. In the Pitt Papers are several letters which the statesman wrote refusing requests for peerages. On this matter, as also with regard to places and appointments, he treated any attempt at bargaining with cold disdain, witness this crushing reply to an Irish peer who, in September 1799, applied for a British peerage: "... There is a passage in the conclusion of your Lordship's letter on which it is impossible for me not to remark that it appears to convey an intimation with respect to what may be your political conduct, which would at all events induce me to decline being the channel of bringing your application before His Majesty."[1]

But rebukes and refusals seem to have made little impression on that generation, imbued as it was with a deep-seated belief that the victors had a right to the spoils and should apportion them among their followers according to rank and usefulness. The whole matter was spoken of under the convenient euphemism "influence," which, when used in a political sense, denoted the secret means for assuring the triumph of the Crown and the reward of the faithful. While not implying actual bribery, it signified persuasion exerted through peerages, places, and pensions. According to this scheme of things, strenuous support of "the King's cause" would earn a title, a bishopric, a judgeship, or a receivership in the customs or excise. These allurements offered irresistible attractions in an age which offered far fewer means of independent advancement than the present. With the exception of those strange persons who preferred to make their own way in life, men of all classes had their eyes fixed on some longed-for perch above them, and divided their attention between the symptoms of decay in its occupant and the signs of the favour of its patron. The expectant part of Society resembled a gigantic hen-roost at the approach of evening, except that the aspirations upward were not signs of quiescence but of ill-suppressed unrest. Those who delve among the confidential letters of that time must often picture the British nation as a mountain-climber. Perhaps one sixth part of Pitt's time was taken up in reading and answering requests of bewildering variety. College friends dunned him with requests for preferment, with or without cure of souls. Rectors longed to be canons; canons to be deans; deans to be bishops; and wealthy bishops coveted sinecure deaneries, among which, curiously enough, that of London was the greatest prize. The infection spread to all classes. Gaugers of beer longed to be collectors of His Majesty's revenue; faithful grooms confidently expected a gaugership; and elderly fishermen, who in their day had intercepted smugglers, demanded, as of right, the post of harbourmaster. A Frenchman once defended the old *régime* on the ground that it ranged all classes about the King in due gradations of privilege. Similarly Britons of their own free will grouped themselves around the throne on steps of expectancy.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 195, pt. ii.

A curious example of the motives which led to influential requests for preferment in the Church is to be found in the correspondence of the Marquis of Carmarthen (afterwards Duke of Leeds), who was at that time Foreign Secretary under Pitt. His letter to his chief may speak for itself:

Private.

Grosvenor Square, Nov. 13 1787.[1]

My dear Sir,

I fear it will not be in my power to return to Hollwood to-day, by which I shall be prevented from so soon troubling you *viva voce* with the only subject I do not like to converse with you upon, viz., asking for Preferment. But my anxiety for my friend Jackson, and understanding that the Bishopric of Chester is not yet given away, will, I hope, plead my excuse to you for asking it for him, and perhaps you may forgive me adding that from local circumstances that preferment in his hands would be particularly agreeable to me, on account of a large part of my northern property being situated in the Diocese of Chester. I do assure you that a compliance with this request would make me truly happy.

Believe me, etc.
Carmarthen.

Reverting to matters which are purely secular, we may note that in the year 1783, at the time of Pitt's assumption of power, the number of English peers was comparatively small, namely about 240, and of these 15, being Roman Catholics, could not sit in Parliament.[2]

This select aristocracy was preserved from some of the worst evils incident to its station by healthful contact with men and affairs. The reversion of its younger sons to the rank of commoners prevented the formation of the huge caste of nobles, often very poor but always intensely proud, which crusted over the surface of society in Continental lands; and again, the infusion of commoners (generally the ablest governors, soldiers, and lawyers of the age) preserved the Order from intellectual stagnation such as had crept over the old *noblesse* of France. Both the downward and the upward streams kept the mass free from that decay which sooner or later besets every isolated body. Nor did the British aristocracy enjoy those flagrant immunities from taxation which were the curse of French social and political life.

But let us view this question in a more searching light. Montesquieu finely observes that an aristocracy may maintain its full vigour, if the laws be such as will habituate the nobles more to the perils and fatigues, than to the pleasures, of command.[3] In this respect the British aristocracy ran some risk of degeneration. It is true that its members took an active part in public business. Their work in the House of Lords was praiseworthy. The debates there, if less exciting than those of the Commons, bear signs of experience, wisdom, dignity, and self-restraint, which were often lacking in the Lower House. The nobles also took a large share in the executive duties of the State. Not only did they and their younger sons fill most of the public offices, including the difficult, and often thankless, diplomatic posts, but they were active in their counties and on their estates, as lords-lieutenant, sheriffs, and magistrates. The days had not yet come when "Society" fled from the terrors of the English winter. For the most part nobles spent the parliamentary vacations at their country seats, sharing in the duties and sports which from immemorial times had knit our folk into a compact and sturdy whole. Yet we may question whether the pleasures of command did not then far exceed its perils and fatigues. Apart from the demoralizing struggle for higher honours, there were hosts of court and parliamentary sinecures to excite cupidity and encourage laziness. The rush after emoluments and pleasure became keener than ever after the glorious peace of 1763, and a perusal of the letters addressed to any statesman of the following age must awaken a doubt whether public life was less corrupt than at the time of Walpole.

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[1] B. M. Add. MSS., 28062. Pitt's answer is not among these papers. But Dr. Jackson did not gain the bishopric.

[2] Lecky, v, 26.

[3] Montesquieu, "Esprit des Lois," bk. viii, ch. v.

Then, again, in the making and working of laws, the privileges of the nobles and gentry were dangerously large. Throughout the eighteenth century those classes strengthened their grip both on Parliament and on the counties and parishes. Up to the year 1711 no definite property qualification was required from members of Parliament; but in that year a law was passed limiting the right of representing counties to those who owned land worth £600 a year; and a rental of half that sum was expected from members of boroughs. This was equivalent to shutting out merchants and manufacturers, who were often Dissenters, from the county representation; and the system of pocket boroughs further enabled landowners to make a careful choice in the case of a large part of the members of towns. Again, the powers of the magistrates, or justices of the peace, in the affairs of the parish, were extraordinarily large. A French writer, M. Boutmy, computes them as equalling those of the the *préfet*, the *conseil d'arrondissement*, the *maire*, the *commissaire de police*, and the *juge de paix*, of the French local government of to-day. Of course the

Shallows of Pitt's time did not fulfil these manifold duties at all systematically; for that would be alien to the haphazard ways of the squires and far beyond their talents. Local despotism slumbered as much as it worked; and just as the Armenians prefer the fitful barbarities of the Turks to the ever-grinding pressure of the Russian bureaucracy, so the villagers of George III's reign may have have been no more oppressed than those of France and Italy are by a system fruitful in good works and jobs, in officials and taxes. On this point it is impossible to dogmatize; for the Georgian peasantry was dumb until the years after Waterloo, when Cobbett began to voice its feelings.

The use of the term "despotism" for the rule of the squires is no exaggeration. They were despots in their own domains. Appeals against the rulings of the local magistrates were always costly and generally futile. It was rare to find legal advisers at their side; and the unaided wits of local landowners decided on all the lesser crimes (many of them punishable with death at the assizes) and the varied needs of the district. With the justices of the peace it lay to nominate the guardians of the poor and "visitors," who supervised the relief of the poor in the new unions of parishes resulting from Gilbert's Act of 1782. The working of the Draconian game-laws was entirely in their hands, and that, too, in days when the right of sporting with firearms was limited to owners of land worth £100 a year. Finally, lest there should be any community of sentiment between the bench and the dock, at the oft-recurring trials for poaching, the same land and money test was applied to all applicants for the honoured post of magistrate. The country gentlemen ruled the parish and they virtually ruled the nation.[1] The fact was proclaimed with characteristic insolence by the Lord Justice Clerk, Macqueen of Braxfield, in his address to the jury at the close of the trial of Thomas Muir for sedition, at Edinburgh in August 1793: "A Government in every country should be just like a Corporation; and in this Country it is made up of the landed interest, which alone has a right to be represented. As for the rabble, who have nothing but personal property, what hold has the nation upon them? What security for the payment of their taxes? They may pack up all their property on their backs and leave the country in the twinkling of an eye. But landed property cannot be removed."[1] The Scottish nobles, especially in the Highlands, still claimed extensive rights over their vassals; and several of them made patriotic use of these powers in raising regiments during the great war with France. Thomas Graham, afterwards Lord Lynedoch, is the best known example of this feudal influence.[2]

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[1] See Sidney and Beatrice Webb, "The Parish and the County," bk. i, ch. iv; bk. ii, ch. ii; Boutmy, "The Eng. Constitution" (Eng. edit.), pt. iii, sect. 3.

In many districts the squires received unwelcome but powerful support from "nabobs." Those decades witnessed a steady flight homewards of Indian officials, for the most part gorged with plunder. They became an appreciable force in politics. Reckless of expense so long as they could enter the charmed circle of the higher gentry, they adopted the politics and aped the ways of their betters; so that many a countryside felt the influence of their greed and ostentation. The yeomen and villagers were the victims of their land-hunger; while the small squires (so says Grose in his Olio of the year 1792) often fell in the course of the feverish race for display. As the Roman moralist inveighed against the influx of Syrian ways into the life of his city, so too might Johnson have thundered at the blending of the barbaric profusion of the Orient with the primal simplicity of the old English life.

For the most part, however, that life still showed the tenacity that marks our race. Certainly in Court circles there were no signs of the advent of commercialism, still less of democracy. The distinctions of rank in England seemed very strict, even to a German, who was accustomed to the formalities of the Hanoverian and Rhenish Courts. Count von Kielmansegge in 1761 noted the precision of etiquette at the State balls: "Rank in England is decided exclusively according to class, and not according to service; consequently the duchesses dance first, then marchionesses, then dukes' daughters, then countesses. Foreigners had no rank at all in England, so they may not dance before the lords and barons. . . . For this reason foreigners seldom dance at Court." It was not etiquette for the King and Queen to dance at the state balls; but, even so, the formalism of those functions must have been pyramidal. The same spirit of formality, fortified by a nice sense of the gradations of rank, appears in the rules of a county club at Derby, where the proceedings seem to have been modelled on the sun and planets, the latter being always accompanied by inferior satellites.[1]

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[1] Howell, State Trials, xxiii, 231.

[2] Delavoye, "Life of T. Graham," 87.

The customs of the *beau monde* in London were regulated by one all-absorbing preoccupation, that of killing time in a gentlemanly and graceful manner. Fielding, in his "Joseph Andrews," thus maps out the day of a fop about the middle of the century:

> In the morning I rose, took my great stick, and walked out in my green frock, with my hair in papers, and sauntered about till ten. Went to the Auction; told Lady B. she had a dirty face, laughed heartily at something Captain G. said (I can't remember what, for I did not very well hear it), whispered to Lord ——, bowed to the Duke of ——, and was going to bid for a snuff-box, but did not, for fear I should have had it. From 2 to 4 dressed myself; 4 to 6 dined; 6 to 8 coffee-house; 8 to 9 Drury Lane Playhouse; 10 to 12 Drawing-room.

The sketch of West End life given by Moritz, a Prussian pastor who visited England in 1782, is very similar, but he enters into more detail. He describes fashionable people as walking about all the morning in a *négligé* attire, "your hair not dressed but merely rolled up in rollers, and in a frock and boots." The morning lasted till four or five o'clock, then the fashionable time for dinner. The most usual dress in that summer was a coat of very dark blue, a short white waistcoat, and white silk stockings. Black was worn for full dress, and Moritz noticed that the English seemed to prefer dark colours. Dress seemed to him to be one of the chief aims and occupations of our people; and he remarked on the extraordinary vogue which everything French then enjoyed.

One is tempted to pause here and dwell on the singular fact that, at the time when England and France were still engaged in deadly strife, each people should be intent on copying the customs and fashions of the other. The decade of the "eighties" witnessed the growth of "Anglomania" to ridiculous proportions in France; while here the governing class thought it an unfailing proof of good breeding to trick out every other sentence with a French phrase. Swift alone could have done justice to the irony of a situation wherein two great nations wasted their resources in encompassing one another's ruin, while every day their words and actions bore striking witness to their admiration of the hereditary foe. Is it surprising that Pitt should have used all his efforts in 1786 to bring about an *entente cordiale* on the basis of the common interests of the two peoples?

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[1] "Letters from Lady Jane Ccke to her friend, Mrs. Eyre, at Derby (1747-58)."

To revert to our theme: the frivolities and absurdities of Mayfair, which figure so largely in the diaries and letters of the period, probably filled a smaller space in the life of the nation than we are apt to infer from those sources. Moritz, who had an eye for the homely as well as the courtly side of life, noticed the good qualities which kept the framework of society sound. He remarked that in London, outside the Court circles, the customs were plain and domestic, the people generally dined about three o'clock, and worked hard.[1] His tour on foot through the Midlands also gave him the impression that England enjoyed a well-balanced prosperity. He was everywhere pitied or despised, it being assumed that a pedestrian must be a tramp. There can be little doubt that even at the end of that disastrous war, our land was far more prosperous than any of the States of North Germany.

The wealth of the proud islanders was nowhere more obvious than at the chief pleasure resorts of Londoners, Vauxhall and Ranelagh. These gardens and promenades impressed Moritz greatly, and he pronounced the scene at the rotunda at Ranelagh the most brilliant which he had ever witnessed: "The incessant change of faces, the far greater number of which were strikingly beautiful, together with the illumination, the extent and majestic splendour of the place, with the continued sound of the music, makes an inconceivably delightful impression." Thanks to the curiosity of the Prussian pastor, we can look down with him on the gay throng, and discern the princes, lords, and knights, their stars far outshining all the commoners present; we see also a difference in the styles of wearing the hair, the French queues and bags contrasting markedly with plain English heads of hair or professional wigs. Most of the company moved in "an eternal circle, to see and to be seen"; others stood near to enjoy the music; others again regaled themselves at the tables with the excellent fare provided for the inclusive sum of half-a-crown; while a thoughtful minority gazed from the gallery and moralized on the scene. The display and extravagance evidently surprised

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[1] C. P. Moritz, "Travels in England in 1782"; W. Wales, "Inquiry into the . . . Population of England" (1781), estimated the number of houses in London at 100,000, and the population at 650,000.

Moritz, as it surprises us when we remember that it was at the close of a ruinous war. In the third year of the struggle, the mercurial Horace Walpole deplored the universal distress, and declared that when he sat in his "blue window," he missed nine out of ten of the lordly chariots that used to roll before it. Yet, in the seventh year, when the half of Europe had entered the lists against the Island Power, the Prussian pastor saw nothing but affluence and heard nothing that did not savour of a determined and sometimes boastful patriotism. At Ranelagh he observed that everyone wore silk stockings, and he was informed that even poor people when they visited that abode of splendour, dressed so as to copy the great, and always hired a coach in order to draw up in state at the entrance.[1]

Ranelagh and Vauxhall, we may note in passing, were beyond the confines of the London of 1780. The city of Westminster was but slowly encroaching on Tothill Fields; and the Queen's House, standing on the site of the present Buckingham Palace, commanded an uninterrupted view westwards over the fields and market gardens spreading out towards the little village of Chelsea. On the south of the Thames there was a mere fringe of houses from the confines of Southwark to the Archbishop's palace at Lambeth; and revellers returning from Vauxhall, whether by river or road, were not seldom sobered by visits from footpads, or the even more dreaded Mohawks. Further afield everything was completely rural. Trotter, Fox's secretary, describes the statesman as living amidst bowers vocal with song-birds at St. Ann's Hill, near Chertsey; and Pitt, in his visits to Wilberforce or Dundas at Wimbledon, would probably pass not a score of houses between Chelsea and the little old wooden bridge at Putney. That village and Wimbledon stood in the same relation to London as Oxshott and Byfleet occupy to-day. North of Chelsea there was the hamlet of Knightsbridge, and beyond it the villages of Paddington and "Marybone."

As Hyde Park Corner marked the western limit of London, so Bedford House and its humbler neighbour, the British Museum, bounded it on the north. The Foundling Hospital stood in open fields. St. Pancras, Islington Spa, and Sadler's Wells were rivals of Epsom and Tunbridge Wells. Clerkenwell Church was the fashionable place for weddings for the richer citizens who dwelt in the northern suburbs opened up by the new City Road completed in 1761. On the east, London ended at Whitechapel, though houses straggled on down the Mile End Road. The amount of the road-borne traffic is curiously illustrated by the fact that the Metropolis possessed only three bridges, London Bridge, Westminster Bridge, and Blackfriars Bridge; and not till the year 1763 did the City Fathers demolish the old houses standing on London Bridge which rendered it impossible for two carts to pass. Already, however, suburbs were spreading along the chief roads out of London. In the "Connoisseur" of September 1754 is a pleasingly ironical account of a week-end visit to the villa of a London tradesman, situated in the desolate fields near Kennington Common, from the windows of which one had a view of criminals hanging from gibbets and St. Paul's cupola enveloped in smoke.

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[1] See, too. Wroth's "London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century."

Nevertheless, the Englishman's love of the country tended to drive Londoners out to the dull little suburbs around the Elephant and Castle, or beyond Tyburn or Clerkenwell; and thus, in the closing years of the century, there arose that dualism of interests (city versus suburbs) which weakens the civic and social life of the metropolis. A further consequence was the waning in popularity of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, as well as of social clubs in general. These last had furnished a very desirable relief to the monotony of a stay-at-home existence. But the club became less necessary when the family lived beyond the river or at "Marybone," and when the merchant spent much time on horseback every day in passing from his office to his villa. Another cause for the decline of clubs of the old type is doubtless to be found in the distress caused by the Revolutionary War, and in the increasing acerbity of political discussions after the year 1790. Hitherto clubs had been almost entirely devoted to relaxation or conviviality. A characteristic figure of Clubland up to the year 1784 had been Dr. Johnson, thundering forth his dicta and enforcing them with thumps on the table. The next generation cared little for conversation as a fine art; and men drifted off to clubs where either loyalty or freedom was the dominant idea. The political arena, which for two generations had been the scene of confused scrambles between greedy factions, was soon to be cleared for that deadliest of all struggles, a war of principles. In that sterner age the butterfly life of Ranelagh became a meaningless anomaly.

For the present, however, no one in England dreamt of any such change. The spirit of the nation, far from sinking under the growing burdens of the American War, seemed buoyant. Sensitive *littérateurs* like Horace Walpole might moan over the ruin of the Empire; William Pitt might declaim against its wickedness with all his father's vehemence; but the nation for the most part plodded doggedly on in the old paths and recked little of reform, except in so far as it concerned the abolition of sinecures and pensions. In 1779-80 County Associations were founded in order to press on the cause of "œconomical reform"; but most of them expired by the year 1784. Alike in thought and in customs England seemed to be invincibly Conservative.

The reasons, other than racial and climatic, for the stolidity of Georgian England would seem to be these. Any approach to enthusiasm, whether in politics or religion, had been tabooed as dangerous ever since the vagaries of the High Church party in the reign of Anne had imperilled the Protestant Succession; and far into the century, especially after the adventure of "Bonnie Prince Charlie," all leanings towards romance were looked on as a reflection on the safe and solid House of Brunswick. Prudence was the first of political virtues, and common sense the supreme judge of creeds and conduct.

External events also favoured the triumph of the commonplace, which is so obvious in the Georgian literature and architecture. The call of the sea and the influence of the New World were no longer inspirations to mighty deeds. The age of adventure was past, and the day of company promoters and slave-raiders had fully dawned. Commerce of an almost Punic type ruled the world. Whereas the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had turned mainly on questions of religion, those of the eighteenth centred more and more on the winning of colonial markets as close preserves for the mother-country. By the Peace of Utrecht (1713) England gained the first place in the race for Empire; and a clause of that treaty enabled her to participate in the most lucrative of trades, the kidnapping of negroes in Africa for the supply of Spanish-America. Never was there a more fateful gain. It built up the fortunes of many scores of merchants and shipowners, but it degraded the British marine and the populace of our ports, in some of which slaves were openly sold. The canker of its influence spread far beyond ships and harbours. Its results were seen in the seared conscience of the nation, and in the lowering of the sense of the sanctity of human life, which in its turn enabled the blind champions of law, especially after the scare of 1745, to multiply capital punishments until more than 160 crimes were punishable by death.

The barbarities of the law and the horrors of the slave-trade finally led to protests in the name of humanity and religion. These came in the first instance from the Society of Friends.[1] But the philanthropic movement did not gather volume until it was fed by the evangelical revival. Clarkson, Zachary Macaulay, Wilberforce (the ablest champion of the cause), and John Howard, the reformer of prisons, were living proofs of the connection which exists between spiritual fervour and love of man. With the foundation, in the year 1787, of the *Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, the philanthropic movement began its career of self-denying effort, which for some five years received valuable support from Pitt. Other signs of a moral awakening were not wanting. In 1772 Lord Chief Justice Mansfield declared that all slaves brought to the United Kingdom became free—a judgement which dealt the death-blow to slave markets in this country. In 1773 John Howard began his crusade for the improvement of gaols; and seven years later Sunday Schools were started by Robert Raikes. The protests of Burke and Sir Charles Bunbury against the pillory, the efforts of the former in 1784-5 to prevent the disgraceful overcrowding of the prisons, and the crusade of Romilly against the barbarities of the penal code are also a tribute to the growth of enlightenment and kindliness.

These ennobling efforts, however, failed to make any impression on what is termed "Society." The highest and the lowest strata are, as a rule, the last to feel the thrill of new movements; for surfeit and starvation alike stunt the better instincts. Consequently, Georgian England became strangely differentiated. The new impulses were quickly permeating the middle classes; but there their influence ceased. The flinty hardness of the upper crust, and the clayey sediment at the bottom, defied all efforts of an ordinary kind. The old order of things was not to be changed save by the explosive forces let loose in France in 1789.

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[1] See ch. xx of this volume for details; also T. Clarkson's "Hist. of the Abolition of the Slave Trade," especially chs. xvii, xviii; and Prof. Ramsay Muir's "Hist. of Liverpool," ch. xii.

That year forms a dividing line in European history, as it does in the career of William Pitt.

Though ominous signs of the approaching storm might already be seen, the noble and wealthy wasted their substance in the usual round of riotous living. It may be well to glance at two of the typical vices of the age, drinking and gambling, of course in those circles alone where they are deemed interesting, for thence only do records reach us.

Drinking did not count as a vice, it was a cherished custom. The depths of the potations after dinner, and on suitable occasions during the day, had always been a feature of English life. Shakespeare seems to aim these well-known lines at the English rather than the Danes:

> This heavy-headed revel east and west
> Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations:
> They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
> Soil our addition.[1]

Certainly in the eighteenth century drinking came to be in a sense a flying buttress of the national fabric. The champions of our "mercantile system" brought about the signature of the Methuen Treaty of 1703 with Portugal, in order to favour trade with that harmless little land at the expense of that with our "natural enemy," France. Hostility to the French being the first of political maxims, good citizens thought it more patriotic to became intoxicated on port wine than to remain sober on French claret. Though we may not endorse Adam Smith's hopeful prediction that the abolition of all duties on wine would have furthered the cause of temperance, yet we may agree that the drunkenness of the age was partly due to "the sneaking arts of underling tradesmen"—when "erected into political maxims for the conduct of a great empire." Equally noteworthy is his verdict that drunkenness was not limited to people of fashion, and that "a gentleman drunk with ale has scarce ever been seen among us."[2]

The habit of tippling, which even the moralist Johnson (*aet.* 70) said might "be practised with great prudence," was everywhere dominant. The thinness and unpracticality of the studies at the old universities were relieved by the depth and seriousness of the potations. The phrase, "a port wine Fellow," lingered to the close of the nineteenth century as a reminiscence of the crusted veterans of a bygone age, whose talk mellowed at the second bottle, and became drivel only at the fourth. Lord Eldon relates how a reverend Silenus, a Doctor of Divinity of Oxford, was once discovered in the small hours feeling his way homewards by the delusive help of the railings encircling the Radcliffe Library, and making lay remarks as to the unwonted length of the journey.[1] Where doctors led the way, undergraduates bettered the example; and the customs of Cambridge, as well as the advice of physicians, served to ingrain in Pitt that love of port wine which helped to shorten his life.

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[1] "Hamlet," i, sc. 4.

[2] "Wealth of Nations," bk. iv, ch. iii, pt. 2.

But the Universities only reflected the customs of an age when "drunk as a lord" had become a phrase. In fashionable society it was usual to set about tippling in a methodical way. Sometimes, at the different stages of the progress, travellers' impressions were recorded in a quaintly introspective manner. Rigby, Master of the Rolls in Ireland, when jocularly asked at dinner by the Prince of Wales to advise him about his marriage, made the witty and wise reply: "Faith, your Royal Highness, I am not drunk enough yet to give advice to a Prince of Wales about marrying."[2] The saying recalls to mind the unofficial habit of training and selecting diplomatists and ambassadors, namely, to ply the aspirants hard and then notice who divulged fewest secrets when under the table.

Fortunately, amidst the Bacchic orgies of the time, the figure of George III stood steadfast for sobriety. His tastes and those of Queen Charlotte were simple and healthy. Further, he was deeply impressed by the miserable end of his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, whose frame, always unwieldy, became a mass of gouty corpulence and staggered on to dissolution at the age of forty-four. The Duke, so it is said, had long before warned the King, if he wished to live to a healthy old age, to avoid all the pleasures of the table.[3] The life and death of the Duke—an example more potent than words—and the homely tastes of the royal pair themselves, served to keep the bill of fare at Windsor well within the compass of that of many a small squire. After hunting for a whole morning, the King was sometimes content to lunch on a jug of barley-water. Stories to this effect endeared "farmer King George" to the plain, wholesome folk of the provinces in whom lay the strength of England; but they aroused no responsive feeling in courtiers and nobles, who looked on such lenten fare as scarcely human, certainly not regal.

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[1] H. Twiss, "Life of Lord Eldon," vol. i, ch. ii.

[2] H. Walpole, "Letters," viii, 395.

[3] "Mems. of Queen Charlotte," 203.

The behaviour of the Prince of Wales, however, tended to bring matters back to the level beloved of the *Comus* rout. The orgies of Carlton House were not seldom bestial; and yet fashionable society seems to have suffered no qualms on hearing that the prince was more than once saved from suffocation by prompt removal of enswathing silks.[1] Dinners became later, longer, and more luxurious. Experienced diners were those who could reckon the banquet, not by the number of glasses, but of bottles. Instead of figuring as an incident in the course of the day, dinner became its climax. We find Horace Walpole in February 1777 complaining that it absorbed the whole of the evening: "Everything is changed; as always must happen when one grows old and is prejudiced to one's old ways. I do not like dining at nearly six, nor beginning the evening at ten at night. If one does not conform one must live alone."

Many letters of that amusing writer show how the latter part of the four hours was spent. Take this reference to the death of Lord Cholmondeley: "He was seventy and had a constitution to have carried him to a hundred, if he had not destroyed it by an intemperance that would have killed anybody else in half the time. As it was, he had outlived by fifteen years all his set, who have reeled into the ferry-boat so long before him." There Horace Walpole laid his finger on one of the sores of the age. Statesmen and generals, parsons and squires, were generally worn out at fifty-five; and if by reason of strength they reached three score years and ten, those years were indeed years of sorrow and gout. In the annals of that period it would be impossible to find a single man possessed of the vigour of Mr. Gladstone at eighty, or the subtlety and firmness displayed by Beaconsfield at Berlin at the age of seventy-four. A nonagenarian was never seen at St. Stephen's: at seventy statesmen were laid by in flannel and wheeled about in bath-chairs. The cause of it all may be summed up in one word—port wine.

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[1] See the new letter of Hugh Elliot to Pitt from Brighthelmstone, 17th Oct. 1785, quoted in ch. xvii, as to the danger of the Prince losing his life if he did not amend his ways.

This chapter would extend to an unwieldy length if a full account were given of what was, perhaps, the most characteristic vice of the age. Gambling has always flourished in an uncultured, reckless and ostentatious society. Men who have no mental resources within themselves are all too apt to seek diversion in the vagaries of chance. Tacitus noted it as the worst vice of the savage Teutons whom in other respects he lauded; and certainly none of their descendants gamed more than the Englishmen of the Georgian era. In vain did the King set his face against the evil. The murmurs grew not loud but deep when he forbade gambling at Court on that much cherished occasion, "twelfth-night." The courtiers then substituted cards, and betted furiously on them, until they too were banished from the royal palaces, even on that merry festival.[1] But here again the Prince of Wales neutralized his father's example, and before long succeeded in contracting debts to a princely amount, whereupon they were considerately paid by Parliament. That sturdy opponent of George III, Charles James Fox, outran even the Prince of Wales in zeal. At an all night sitting he is known to have lost £12,000; and, putting fortune to the test, lost successively £12,000 and £11,000 more. His great rival, the younger Pitt, plunged into play for a brief space, but on finding it get too strong a hold over him, resolutely freed himself from its insidious meshes. Thereafter that genial wit, George Selwyn, pointed the moral of their early careers by comparing the rivals to the industrious and idle apprentices of Hogarth.

The mention of Hogarth awakens a train of thought alien to his self-satisfied age. One begins to inquire what was the manner of life of those coarse thickset figures who fill the background of his realistic canvases. Were Englishmen of the lower orders really given over to Bacchic orgies alternating with long spells of flesh-restoring torpor? What was their attitude towards public affairs? While Rousseau began to open out golden vistas of a social millennium, were the toilers really so indifferent to all save the grossest facts of existence? The question is difficult to answer. The Wilkes affair seemed for the time to arouse universal interest, but the low class Londoners who bawled themselves hoarse for "Wilkes and Liberty" probably cared for that demagogue mainly because he was a Londoner bent on defying the House of Commons. Personal feelings rather than political convictions seem to have determined their conduct; for Wilkes was not reviled a few years later when he went over to the King's side. Meanwhile the Gordon Riots had shown the London populace in another light. As for the County Reform Associations of the years 1780-4, they had very little hold upon the large towns, except in Yorkshire; and there the movement was due to the exceptionally bad representation and to the support of the great Whig landlords. The experience of those decades proves that political action which arises out of temporary causes (especially of a material kind) will lead to little result.

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[1] "Mems. of Queen Charlotte," 187.

That mercurial and ill-educated populace seems to have shaken off its political indifference only at the time of a general election. Moritz describes the tumultuous joy with which Londoners took part in the election of the year 1782. The sight of carters and draymen eagerly listening to the candidates at the hustings; their shouts for a speech from Fox; the close interest which even the poorest seemed to feel in their country's welfare, made a deep impression on Moritz, who found the sight far more exhilarating than that of reviews on the parade ground at Berlin. His mental comparison of Londoners with the Romans of the time of Coriolanus was, however, cut short when he saw "the rampant spirit of liberty and the wild impatience of a genuine English mob." At the end of the proceedings the assembly tore down the hustings, smashed the benches and chairs, and carried the fragments about with them as signs of triumph.[1] Rousseau and Marat, who saw something of English life during their stay in this country, declared that Britons were free only during an election; and the former averred that the use which they made of "the brief moments of freedom renders the loss of liberty well deserved."[2] Certainly their elections were times of wild licence; and the authorities seem to have acquiesced in the carnival as tending to promote a dull, if not penitential, obedience in the sequel. Not without reason, then, did Horace Walpole exclaim, at the close of the American War—"War is a tragedy; other politics but a farce."

The moralist who cons the stories of the frivolity and vice of that age is apt to wonder that any progress was made in a society where war and waste seemed to be the dominant forces. Yet he should remember that it is the extravagant and exceptional which is chronicled, while the humdrum activities of life, being taken for granted, find no place either in newspapers, memoirs, or histories. We read that in the eight years of the American War the sum of £115,000,000 was added to the National Debt, the interest on which in the year 1784 amounted to £9,669,435.[1] But do we inquire how a country, which with great difficulty raised a revenue of £25,000,000 a year, could bear this load and the far heavier burdens of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars? The problem seems insoluble until we remember that British industry was then entering on its most expansive phase. The condition of our land may be compared with that of a sturdy oak which has had one of its limbs torn away and its foliage blighted by a storm. Yet, if the roots grip the soil deep down, the sap of a single season will restore the verdure, and in a few years the dome of foliage will rise as shapely and imposing as ever. So was it to be with England. Her astonishingly quick recovery may be ascribed partly to the exertions of the great man whose public life will here be set forth. But one man can do little more than direct the toil of the many to fruitful issues; and the fruitfulness that marked the first decade of his supremacy resulted from the contact of the nation's roots with a new and fertile layer of soil.

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[1] "Travels in England in 1782," by C. P. Moritz (Eng. trans., 1895), 53.

[2] Rousseau, "Social Contract," bk. iii, ch. xv.

Below the surface of the national life, with its wars and party intrigues, there lay another world, in which the thoughts of Watt and Trevithick, of Hargreaves, Arkwright and Cartwright, were slowly taking shape in actuality. There lay the England of the future. Already its strength, though but that of an embryo, sufficed to send up enough of vital sap quickly to repair the losses of war; and the first claim of the younger Pitt to the title of Statesman lay in his perception of the needs and claims of this hidden life.

The mechanical inventions which led up to the era of great production resulted indirectly from the outburst of industrial activity that followed the victorious issue of the Seven Years' War. "Necessity is the mother of Invention"; and the great need after 1763 was to quicken the spinning of yarn so that the spinsters of a household could keep the father supplied with enough weft for his loom. This necessity quickened the wits of a Lancashire weaver, Hargreaves; and in 1764 he constructed his "jenny," to lighten the toil of his wife. In quick succession came the inventions of Arkwright and Crompton, as already noted. The results obtained by the latter were surprising, muslin and other delicate fabrics being wrought with success in Great Britain. In a special Report issued by the East India Company in 1793, the complaint was made that every shop in England offered for sale "British muslins equal in appearance and of more elegant patterns than those of India, for one fourth, or perhaps more than one third, less price."[1] Further improvements increased the efficiency of this machinery, which soon was used extensively in the north-west of England, and in Lanarkshire. The populations of Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and Birmingham, after 1780, began to increase amazingly.[2] Hitherto they had numbered between 30,000 and 60,000 souls. Now they began to outstrip Bristol and Norwich, the second and third of English cities.

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[1] Dr. Cunningham, "Eng. Industry and Commerce," pt. ii, 546, 698.

It is noteworthy that the Industrial Revolution in this, its first phase, brought wealth and contentment to all members of the community. The quantities of thread, varying in fineness, but severally invariable in texture and strength, enabled the handloom weavers to push on with their work with none of the interruptions formerly caused by the inability of hard-pressed spinsters to supply the requisite amount of yarn. These last, it is true, lost somewhat in economic independence; for by degrees they sank to the position of wage-earners in mills, but they were on the whole less hard-worked than before, water furnishing the power previously applied by the spinster's foot; and the family retained its independence because the father and brothers continued to work up cloth on their own hand-looms and to sell the produce at the weekly markets of Manchester or Blackburn, Leeds or Halifax. In the case of the staple industry of Yorkshire, many men reared the sheep, dressed and dyed the fleeces, worked up the thread into cloth, and finally, with their sons, took it on a packhorse to the nearest cloth market. A more complete example of economic independence it would be difficult to find; and the prosperity of this class—at once farmers, and dyers, manufacturers, and cloth merchants—was enhanced by the new spinning machinery which came rapidly into use after the year 1770.

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[1] Quoted by Baines, "History of the Cotton Manufacture," 334.

[2] W. Wales, *op. cit.*, 5.

This fact is emphasized in a vivid sketch of life in a Lancashire village drawn by one who saw it at the time of these momentous developments. William Radcliffe describes the prosperity which they brought to the homes of the farmer-artisans who formed the bulk of the population of his native village of Mellor, about fourteen miles north of Manchester. He calls the years 1788 to 1803 the golden age of the cotton industry. Every out-house in the village was fitted as a loom-shop; and the earnings of each family averaged from 80 to 100 or sometimes even 120 shillings a week.[1] This account, written by a man who rose to be a large manufacturer at Stockport is probably overdrawn; but there can be no doubt that the exuberant prosperity of the North of England provided the new vital force which enabled the country speedily to rise with strength renewed at the very time when friends and enemies looked to see her fall for ever. Some idea of the magnitude of this new source of wealth may be gained from the official returns of the value of the cotton goods exported from Great Britain at the following dates:

1710	£5,698
1751	45,986
1764	200,354
1780	355,060
1785	864,710
1790	1,662,369
1795	2,433,331
1800	3,572,217
1806	9,753,824

After 1803 Cartwright's power-loom came more and more into use, and that, too, at the time when Watt's steam-engine became available for general use. The pace of the Industrial Revolution was thus accelerated; and in this, its third phase, the far-reaching change brought distress to the homes of the weavers, as was to be seen in the Luddite riots of 1810-11. This, however, belongs to a period later than that dealt with in these pages. Very noteworthy is the fact that in the years 1785-1806, which nearly cover the official life of Pitt, the exports of cotton goods increased almost twelvefold in value; and that the changes in the textile industries enhanced not only the wealth of the nation but also the prosperity of the working classes in districts which had been the poorest and most backward.

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[1] "Origin of Power-loom Weaving," by W. Radcliffe, 59 *et seq.*

Limits of space preclude any reference to the revolution wrought in the iron industry when coal and coke began to take the place of wood in the smelting of that metal. It must suffice to say that, whereas the English iron industry had seemed in danger of extinction, it now made giant strides ahead. In 1777 the first iron bridge was erected at Coalbrookdale over the Severn. Six years later Cort of Gosport obtained a patent for converting pig-iron into malleable-iron by a new and expeditious process;[1] and in 1790 the use of steam-engines at the blast furnaces trebled their efficiency. This and the former reference to the steam-engine will suffice to remind the reader of the enormous developments opened up in all manufactures when the skill and patience of Watt transformed a scientific toy into the most important generator of power hitherto used by man.

Thus, in the closing years of the eighteenth century—that much despised century, which really produced nearly all the great inventions that the over-praised nineteenth century was merely to develop—the Industrial Revolution entered on its second phase. The magnets which thenceforth irresistibly attracted industry, and therefore population, were coal and iron. Accordingly, as Great Britain had abundance of these minerals in close proximity, she was able in a very short space of time to become the workshop of the world. The Eldorado dreamt of by the followers of Columbus was at last found in the Midlands and moorlands of the north of England. For the present, the discovery brought no curse with it. While multiplying man's powers, it also stimulated his ingenuity in countless ways. Far from diverting his energies from work to what is, after all, only the token of work, it concentrated his thoughts upon productive activity, and thus helped not only to make work but to make man.

While the moors and vales of the North awakened to new and strange activities, the agricultural districts of the Midlands and

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[1] In Pitt MSS., 221, is a petition signed by many persons connected with the navy in favour of granting a pension to Mr. Cort, who had made "malleable iron with raw pit-coal, and manufactured the same by means of grooved rollers, by a process of his own invention." The petitioners state that though the invention had brought no benefit to Cort, but rather the reverse, yet it had proved to be of national importance.

South also advanced in wealth and population. A scientific rotation of crops, deep ploughing, and thorough manuring of the soil altered the conditions of life. Here again England led the way. Arthur Young, in his "Travels in France" (1787-9) never tires of praising the intelligence and energy of our great landowners, whereas in France his constant desire is to make the *seigneurs* "skip." In the main, no doubt, the verdict of Young was just. Landlords in England were the leaders of agricultural reform. In France they were clogs on progress. Yet, the changes here were not all for good. That is impossible. The semi-communal and almost torpid life of the village was unequal to the claims of the new age; and, amidst much of discomfort and injustice to the poor, individual tenures, enclosures, and high-farming became the order of the day.[1] New facilities for travel, especially in the form of mail-coaches, better newspapers (a result of the Wilkes affair)—these and other developments of the years 1770-84 heralded the dawn of an age which was to be more earnest, more enlightened, less restful, and far more complex. The times evidently called for a man who, while holding to all that was best in the old life, fully recognized the claims of the coming era. Such a man was William Pitt.

In many respects he summed up in his person the tendencies of the closing decades of the century, just as the supreme figure of his father reflected all that was most brilliant and chivalrous in the middle of the Georgian era. If the elder Pitt raised England to heights of splendour never reached before, the younger helped to retrieve the disasters brought on by those who blindly disregarded the warnings of his father. In the personality both of father and of son there was a stateliness that overawed ordinary mortals, but the younger man certainly came more closely into touch with the progressive tendencies of the age. A student of Adam Smith, he set himself to foster the industrial energies of the land. In order to further the cause of peace, he sought the friendship of the French nation, of which Chatham was the inveterate enemy; and in the brightest years of his career he seemed about to inaugurate the golden age foretold by the Illuminati. As by contact with Adam Smith he marched at the head of the new and peaceful commercialism, so too through his friendship with Wilberforce he felt the throb of the philanthropic movements of his times.

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[1] W. Wales, *op. cit.*, 44 *et seq.*, enumerates several cases where the rural population declined, but he attributed that fact not to the enclosures (for he states that the enclosures of wastes, which were more numerous than those of the open fields, increased employment), but rather to the refusal of landlords to build cottages, though they charged higher rents than before. For the question of enclosures, however, see Dr. Gilbert Slater's recent work on the subject (Constable and Co., 1907).

For the new stirrings of life in the spheres of religion, art, and literature, Pitt felt no deep concern. Like his father, and like that great genius of the South who wrecked his career, he was "a political being." In truth, the circumstances of the time compelled him to concentrate all his energies on public affairs. It was his lot to steer the ship of state through twenty of the most critical years of its chequered voyage. Taking the tiller at a time of distress, he guided the bark into calmer waters; and if he himself did not live on to weather a storm more prolonged and awful than that from which he at first saved his people, yet even in the vortex of the Napoleonic cyclone he was to show the dauntless bearing, the firm faith in the cause of ordered freedom, the unshaken belief in the destinies of his race, which became the son of Chatham and the typical Englishman of the age.

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

I am glad that I am not the eldest son, but that I can serve my country in the House of Commons like papa.—PITT, May 1766.

CHAMPIONS of the customs of primogeniture must have been disquieted by observing how frequently the mental endowments of the parents were withheld from their eldest son and showered upon his younger brother. The first Earl of Chatham was a second son, and found his doughtiest opponent in Henry Fox, Lord Holland, also a second son. By a singular coincidence the extraordinary talents of their second sons carried them in their turn to the head of their respective parties and engaged them in the longest duel which the annals of Parliament record. And when the ascendancy of William Pitt the Younger appeared to be unshakably established, it was shattered by the genius of the second surviving son of Charles Marie de Buonaparte.

The future defender of Great Britain was born on 28th May 1759, just ten years before the great Corsican. His ancestry, no less than the time of his birth, seemed to be propitious. The son of the Earl of Chatham, he saw the light in the year when the brilliant victories of Rodney, Boscawen, Hawke, and Wolfe lessened the French navy by sixty-four sail of the line, and secured Canada for Britain. The almost doting fondness which the father felt for the second son, "the hope and comfort of my life," may perhaps have been the outcome of the mental ecstasy of those glorious months.

If William Pitt was fortunate in the time of his birth, he was still more so in the character of his father. In the nature of "the Great Commoner," the strain of pride and vanity was commingled with feelings of burning patriotism, and with a fixed determination to use all honourable means for the exaltation of his country.

Never since the age of Elizabeth had Englishmen seen a man of personality so forceful, of self-confidence so indomitable, of patriotism so pure and intense. The effect produced by his hawk-like eye, his inspiring mien and oratory was heightened by the consciousness that here at last was an honest statesman. In an age when that great party manipulator, Walpole, had reduced politics to a game of give and take, the scrupulous probity of Chatham (who refused to touch a penny of the interest on the balance at the War Ministry which all his predecessors had appropriated) shone with redoubled lustre. His powers were such as to dazzle his contemporaries. The wide sweep of his aims in 1756-61, his superb confidence as to their realization, the power of his oratory, his magnetic influence, which made brave officers feel the braver after an interview with him—all this enabled him completely to dominate his contemporaries.

In truth his personality was so dazzling as to elude the art of portraiture. At ordinary times he might have been little more than a replica of that statesman of the reign of Charles II whom Dryden has immortalized:

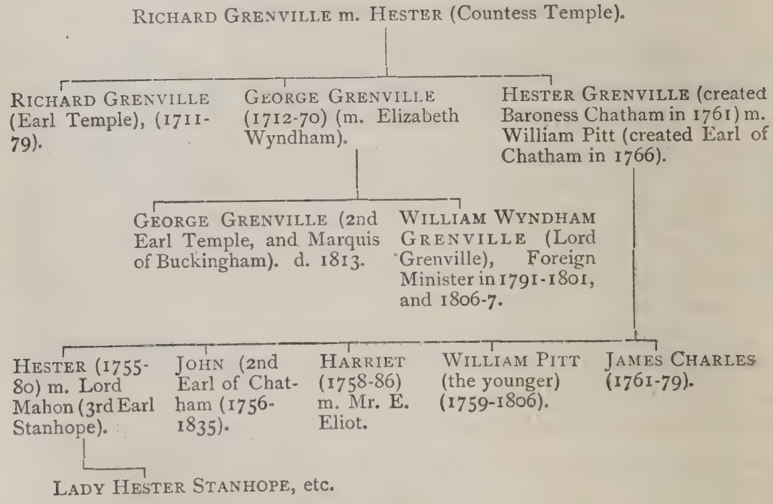
> A man so various that he seemed to be
> Not one, but all mankind's epitome.

But Chatham was fortunate in his times. He certainly owed very much to the elevating force of a great idea. In the early part of his life, when no uplifting influence was at work, his actions were often grossly incongruous and at times petty and factious. Not until he felt the inspiration of the idea of Empire did his genius wing its way aloft. If it be true that the Great Commoner made the British Empire, it is also true that the Empire made him what he was, the inspirer of heroic deeds, the invigorator of his people.

In comparison with these qualities, which entitle him to figure in English annals as Aristotle's "magnificent man," his defects were venial. Nevertheless, as some of them lived on in a lesser degree in his son, we must remember his arrogance, his melodramatic airs, his over-weening self-will, and his strange inconsistencies. In no one else would these vices and defects have been tolerated; that they were overlooked in him is the highest tribute that can be paid to the splendour of his services and the sterling worth of his nature.

If we look further back into the antecedents of the Pitt family we find it domiciled at or near Blandford in Dorset, where it had produced one poet of quite average abilities, Christopher Pitt (1699-1748), whose translation of Virgil had many admirers. The love of adventure and romance, so often found in West Country families, had already been seen in Thomas Pitt (1653-1726), who worked his way to the front in India despite the regulations of the Company, became Governor of Madras, and made his fortune by very questionable transactions.[1] His great stroke of good fortune was the purchase of the famous diamond, which he thereafter sold to the Regent of France for nearly six times the price of purchase. He married a lady who traced her descent to a natural son of James V of Scotland; and to this union of a daring adventurer with the scion of a chivalrous race we may perhaps refer the will-power and the mental endowments which shone so brightly in their grandson, the first Earl of Chatham.

On his mother's side the younger Pitt could claim a distinguished descent. Her maiden name was Hester Grenville, and she was the daughter of Richard Grenville and Hester, Countess Temple. The appended table will show the relation of the Pitt and Grenville families:


RICHARD GRENVILLE m. HESTER (Countess Temple).
RICHARD GRENVILLE (Earl Temple), (1711-79).
GEORGE GRENVILLE (1712-70) (m. Elizabeth Wyndham).
HESTER GRENVILLE (created Baroness Chatham in 1761) m. William Pitt (created Earl of Chatham in 1766).
GEORGE GRENVILLE (2nd Earl Temple, and Marquis of Buckingham). d. 1813.
WILLIAM WYNDHAM GRENVILLE (Lord Grenville), Foreign Minister in 1791-1801, and 1806-7.
HESTER (1755-80) m. Lord Mahon (3rd Earl Stanhope).
JOHN (2nd Earl of Chatham (1756-1835).
HARRIET (1758-86) m. Mr. E. Eliot.
WILLIAM PITT (the younger) (1759-1806).
JAMES CHARLES (1761-79).
LADY HESTER STANHOPE, etc.

The personality of Lady Chatham, if less remarkable, is more lovable than that of her husband. In contrast to his theatrical, lordly, and imperious ways, she shone by her simplicity and sweetness. His junior by many years, she accepted his devotion with something of awe, and probably felt his oft recurring attacks of gout, for which he magniloquently apologized, to be a link between them; for the Jove of the Senate became docile and human when he was racked with pain.[1] Her tender care at these times, and at others her tactful acquiescence in his moods and plans, ensured tranquillity and happiness in their household. Not that she lacked firmness of character, when occasion required; but we may ascribe her pliability to the personal ascendancy of her lord, to the customs of the times, and to her perception of the requisites for a peaceful existence. She carried her complaisance so far as to leave to her consort the choice of the residence at Hayes, near Bromley, in Kent, which he bought at the end of the year 1754. The following are the almost Griselda-like terms in which she defers to his opinion on the matter: "For the grand affair proposed by my dear love, I have only to reply that I wish him to follow what he judges best, for he can best judge what sort of economy suits with the different plans which he may choose to make hereafter. Whatever you decide upon will be secure of being approved by me."[2]

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[1] See Dr. von Ruville's work, "William Pitt, Earl of Chatham" (Eng. ed., 3 vols. 1907), for a full account of these forbears.

When a woman renounces all claim to a voice in the selection of her abode, we may be sure that she will neither interfere much in her husband's political career, nor seek to shine in a *salon* of blue-stockings. In fact, Lady Chatham's influence on her children was purely domestic. Her realm was the home. There is scarcely a trace of any intellectual impress consciously exerted upon her gifted son, William; but her loving care ensured his survival from the many illnesses of his early years; and she dowered him with the gentler traits for which we search in vain in the coldly glittering personality of Chatham. As examples of her loving care for her children, I may cite the following passages from her letters. In August 1794, when she felt old age coming on apace, she wrote in this tender strain:

> I feel that I cannot support the idea of leaving you, my beloved sons, without saying unto ye how truly my fond affection has increasingly

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[1] Ruville, i, 343-6.

[2] *Ibid.*, 345. Pitt finally bought about 100 acres, and further strained his resources by extensive building at Hayes.

> ever attended ye both, and that my constant prayers have been daily addresst to the Omnipotent Disposer of all events, that you might be directed in all things by the blessing of heavenly wisdom . . .

Or take this gentle chiding to William (25th April 1796):

> I do not [hear] from you, my dear son, but I hear often of you in a way that makes up to me in the best manner possible for your silence. I cannot, however, help wishing that my pleasure was increased by receiving now and then a few words from you, and immediately comes almost a reflection that obliges me to unwish it again, that I may not take up any part of the small leisure you have to enjoy a little relaxation from your various calls.

The old lady long retained her vigour; for in the autumn of 1795 she describes herself as "stout enough both in body and mind to wish the wind to shift to the east so that the fleet might not be detained."[1] Indeed, in the even strength of her body, as in the constancy of her mind, she far excelled her husband. We find Wilberforce, in the summer of 1791, entering the following note in his diary: "Old Lady Chatham, a noble antiquity—Lady Chatham asked about Fox's speaking—is much interested about politics—seventy-five years old, and a very active mind."[2]

Doubtless, her pride in the triumphs of her second son explains the singular buoyancy of her nature almost up to the time of her death. She must have recognized him as pre-eminently her child. In appearance he certainly favoured her. A comparison of the two noble Gainsboroughs of mother and son preserved at Orwell Park shows William to have been more a Grenville than a Pitt. His nose—that feature on which caricaturists eagerly fastened, and on which he was said proudly to suspend the House of Commons—had nothing in common with Chatham's aquiline and terrifying prow. So, too, the whole bearing of the son was less fiery and less formidable than that of the father. In Chatham there lay the potentialities of a great warrior; but in the son's nature these powers were wholly subordinate to the faculties that make for supremacy in civil affairs, namely, patience, reasonableness, and aptitude for logic and finance. Above all, there shone in the younger Pitt a harmony of the faculties, in which the father was lacking.

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[1] "Pitt, some Chapters of his Life and Times," by Lord Ashbourne, 161-6.

[2] "The Life of William Wilberforce," by his Sons, i, 304.

There is ample proof of the devotion with which Pitt regarded his parents. His letters to them were long and loving; but while he addressed Chatham in the stilted terms which the Earl himself affected, he wrote to his mother in a simple and direct style that tells of complete sympathy. In one of his youthful letters to her he apologized humbly for some little act of inattention; and in later years the busy Prime Minister often begged her forgiveness for his long silence. In all 363 letters to his mother have survived, and prove the tenderness of his love. Clearly also he valued her advice; for at the crisis of the early part of 1783 he asked her opinion whether or no he should take office as Prime Minister.[1] For the most part the letters contain little more than references to private affairs, which prove the warmth of his family feelings; but sometimes, especially in the later years when the overworked Prime Minister could rarely visit his mother at her home, Burton Pynsent in Somerset, he gives reasons for hoping that the progress of measures through Parliament, or the state of the negotiations with France during the Revolutionary war, would permit him to pay her a visit. The letters bear touching witness to the hopefulness of spirit which buoyed him up; but sometimes they are overclouded by disappointments in the political sphere, which were all the keener because they held him to his post and prevented the longed-for stay at Burton Pynsent in August or at Christmas. In such cases Lady Chatham's replies are restrained and dignified. I shall sometimes draw on this correspondence, especially where it reveals Pitt's hopes for the work of the session or the conclusion of peace.

Ingenious pleaders from the time of Macaulay onwards have shown their skill in comparing the achievements of father and son. The futility of all such tight-rope performances must be obvious to those who remember the world-wide difference between the cataclysmic forces and novel problems of the revolutionary era and the comparatively simple tasks of the age of Chatham. We shall have cause, later on, to insist on the difference in efficiency between Frederick the Great and Frederick William II as an ally; and not even the most fervent panegyrists of Chatham will dare to assert that the ill-led and underfed armies of Louis XV were foes as redoubtable as the enthusiastic hosts called into being and marshalled by the French Revolution and Napoleon.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 11 and 13.

Nevertheless, there is one of these fallacious comparisons which deserves a brief notice. Lady Chatham, on being asked by one of her grandchildren which was the cleverer, the Earl of Chatham or Mr. Pitt, replied: "Your grandpapa without doubt."[1] The answer is remarkable. No woman in modern times has been blessed with such prodigality of power and talent both in husband and son; and we, with a knowledge of the inner forces of the two periods which she could not possess, may perhaps be inclined to ascribe her verdict to the triumph of the early memories of the wife even over the promptings of maternal pride. Explain it as we may, her judgement is certainly a signal instance of self-effacement; for the gifts of tact, prudence, and consistency whereby Pitt restored England to her rightful place in the years 1783-93 were precisely those which he derived from her.

It has often been remarked that great men have owed more to the mother's nature than to that of the father; and, while Chatham dowered his second son with the qualities that make for versatility, display, and domination, his mother certainly imparted to him forethought, steadiness of purpose, and the gentler gifts that endeared him to a select circle of friends. Here again, one might suggest a parallel between Pitt and his great opponent, Napoleon, who owed to his father characteristics not unlike those named above, but received from his mother the steel-like powers of mind and body which made him so terrible an opponent.

Enough has been said to indicate some of the influences of heredity which helped to shape the career of Pitt. It is a topic on which only sciolists would venture to dogmatize. Even in his early youth William began to outshine his elder brother. In their boyhood, mostly spent at Hayes, the difference of temperament between John and William made itself felt to the disadvantage of the former. He was reserved, not to say heavy and indolent, where William was bright and attractive. "Eager" is the epithet applied to him by Lady Chatham in 1766. The eldest son, having none of the intellectual gifts and graces of Chatham, could not satisfy the imperious cravings of the father, with the result that William received an undue share of admiration. He was "the wonderful boy." John was designed for the army, with results no less unfortunate for England than a similar choice proved ultimately to be for France in the case of Joseph Bonaparte. Well would it have been for the United Kingdom had John Pitt allowed the glorious name of Chatham to sink to comfortable mediocrity on the paternal estates of Hayes or Burton Pynsent, and never to be associated with the Isle of Walcheren. His colleagues in the Cabinet learnt to respect his judgement as that of a safe man; but, as the sequel will show, he was utterly lacking in energy and the power of inspiring others.

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[1] Stanhope, ii, 125.

William, having alertness of mind and brightness of speech, was designed for Parliament. Or rather, this was his choice at the age of seven. In May 1766, on hearing that his father was raised to the Peerage, he told his tutor, the Rev. Edward Wilson, in all seriousness, that he was glad he was not the eldest son, but that he could serve his country in the House of Commons like his papa.[1] The words have often been misquoted, even by Earl Stanhope, the boy being reported as saying, "I want to speak in the House of Commons like papa." The words, when correctly cited, are remarkable, not for childish conceit, but for a grave and premature sense of responsibility. They show the strength of that patriotic instinct which inspired every action of his career, spurring him on to his early studies, and to the complex and crushing duties of his youth and manhood. They sound the keynote of his character and enable us to form some notion of the strength of that life-long desire to serve his native land. This, his first recorded utterance, links itself in noble unison with that last tragic gasp of 23rd January 1806—"My country. How I leave my country!"

The health of the little William was so precarious that he and his brothers and sisters spent much time at the seaside resorts, Weymouth and Lyme Regis, which were not far from Burton Pynsent, an estate bequeathed by an admirer to the Earl of Chatham. Yet notwithstanding all the care bestowed on him, the boy had but a frail hold on life. Illness beset him during fully the half of his youth. At the age of fourteen he was still short and thin and weighed only six stone, two pounds.[1] Observers, however, agree that his spirits always rose superior to weakness; and to this characteristic, as also to his indomitable will, we may attribute his struggling on through an exhausting career to the age of forty-seven. The life of Pitt is a signal proof of the victory which mind can, for a time, win over matter.

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[1] "Correspondence of the Earl of Chatham," iii, 27

Very naturally, his parents decided to have him trained at home rather than at a public school. Chatham, while at Eton, formed the most unfavourable impression of the public school system and summed it up in his remark to Shelburne that he had "scarce observed a boy who was not cowed for life at Eton; that a public school might suit a boy of a turbulent, forward disposition, but would not do where there was any gentleness."[2]

The tutor chosen for this purpose was the Rev. Edward Wilson, of Pembroke Hall (now College), Cambridge, who had charge of him from his sixth to his fourteenth year. The mutual affection of tutor and pupil is seen in a letter which the tutor wrote at Weymouth in September 1766, describing William as often standing by him while he read, and making remarks that frequently lit up the subject and impressed it on the memory. His ardour, he adds, could not be checked.[3] Wilson's training seems to have been highly efficient, as will appear when we come to consider the phenomenal attainments of his pupil at the time of his admission to the University of Cambridge.

It is perhaps significant that that later prodigy of learning and oratorical power, Macaulay, was also not brought into contact with our public school system. Both of these remarkable men may have owed some of their originality to the thoroughness of the private tuition which they received before entering the university. Had they passed through the mill of a public school they would certainly have been less angular, and would have gained in knowledge of men. Pitt especially might have cast off that reserve and stiffness which often cost him so dear. But both of them would assuredly have lost in individuality what they might have gained in *bonhomie*. Still more certain is it that those hotbeds of slang would have unfitted them for the free expression of their thoughts in dignified and classical English. The ease with which, from the time of his first entrance into Parliament, Pitt wielded the manifold resources of his mother tongue may be ascribed partly to hereditary genius but also to daily converse with one of the greatest of orators. It was Chatham's habit to read with his favourite son passages from the Bible or from some other great classic. We also know from one of the Earl's private memoranda that he made it a special study to clothe his thoughts in well-chosen words.[1] Indeed, he never talked but always conversed. We may be sure, then, that even the lighter efforts of the statesman must have been to the boy at once an inspiration to great deeds, a melodious delight, and a lesson in rhetoric. What youth possessed of genius would not have had his faculties braced by learning English from such a tongue, by viewing mankind through such a lens?

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[1] Notes by Bishop Tomline in the Pretyman MSS., Orwell Park.

[2] Lord Fitzmaurice, "Life of Shelburne," i, 72. See also two articles on the early life of the elder Pitt in the "Edinburgh Review" for 1910.

[3] "Chatham Corresp.," iii, 65.

This education at home probably explains one of Pitt's marked characteristics, namely, his intense hopefulness. Brought up on the best authors, imbued with the highest principles, and lacking all knowledge of the seamy side of life, he cherished an invincible belief in the triumph of those aims which he felt to be good and true. This is an invaluable faculty; but it needs to be checked by acquaintance with the conduct of the average man; and that experience Pitt scarcely ever gained except by hearsay. Sir George Trevelyan has remarked that the comparative seclusion of Macaulay in youth led to his habitual over-estimate of the knowledge usually possessed by men. Certainly it led to the creation of that singular figment, "Macaulay's school-boy." A similar remark probably holds true of the quality of Pitt's nature noted above. Partly, no doubt, his hopefulness was the heritage bequeathed by Chatham; but it was strengthened by Pitt's bookish outlook on life.

The surroundings of his childhood and early youth must also have favoured the growth of that patrician virtue, confidence. Up to the year 1774 he lived on his father's estates at Hayes and Burton Pynsent, amidst some of the choicest scenery in the south of England. The land overflowed with prosperity, which was rightly ascribed in large measure to the genius of Chatham. Until the shadow of the American War of Independence fell on the youth, in his seventeenth year, he was the favourite son of a father whom all men revered; and his lot was cast in a land which seemed to be especially favoured. Thus pride of family and pride of race must have helped to stiffen the mental fibre of a youth on whom nature and art alike showered the gifts and graces of a chivalrous order. In a coarse nature the result would have been snobbishness. In William Pitt the outcome was devotion to the ideals of his father and buoyant confidence as to their ultimate triumph.

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[1] "Chatham Corresp.," iv, 538.

In some respects there is truth in the statement of Windham that Pitt never was young. Certainly for so delicate a plant the forcing process was perilously early and prolonged. In the Pitt Papers (No. XI) I have found a curious proof of the hold which the boy had over Latin at a very early age. It is a letter written to his father, the general correctness of which contrasts strangely with its large round letters enclosed within lines. It is not dated, but probably belongs to 1766, that is, to the seventh year of his age.

> MI CHARISSIME PATER,
>
> Gaudeo audire te rursum bene valere. Vidimus primates Mohecaunnuck et Wappinger, Tribuum Indicorum a septentrioli America, qui veniunt in Angliam supplicare regem ob quosdam agros. Gulielmus Johnson, eques auratus, desiderabat auxilium eorum in bello, et illi omnes abierunt ut pugnarent contra Gallos; sed, cum domum rediebant, sentiebant Batavos arripuisse omnes suos agros. Vulgus apud Portland illos parum commode tractabat.
>
> Sum, mi charissime Pater,
> tibi devinctissimus,
> GULIELMUS PITT.

I have also found a curious proof of the stilted style in which the boy wrote to his father, while on the very same day he wrote to his brother almost in the terms which a boy of eleven would use. To the Earl of Chatham he thus begins a letter of 31st July 1770:

> From the weather we have had here I flatter myself that the sun shone on your expedition, and that the views were enough enlivened thereby to prevent the drowsy Morpheus from taking the opportunity of the heat to diffuse his poppies upon the eyes of the travellers.[1]

This almost rises to the pomposity of style with which Chatham described to his son William the stinging of carriage-horses by wasps. The insects figure as "an ambuscade of Pandours," and the horses as "these coursers of spirit not inferior to Xanthus and Podarges."[1]

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[1] Pitt MSS., 11

Here on the other hand is the boy's letter to his brother:

Hayes, July 31 1770.

DEAR BROTHER,

I assure you that I am obliged to you beyond what is to be expressed for your epistle or journal. The dialogue between you and your host is very entertaining to those not interested in the want of provision in the inn. But I fancy it was not so to you, as it afforded little or no hope of dinner unless you could dine on the small tithes. The 2 Masons are incomparable. I think the intended candidate is to the full as likely as G. O. to succeed, and for what I know deserves it better. As I have seen neither the statue at Guilford nor that at South Carolina, I cannot judge which excels in point of workmanship, but I know which of the two noble Persons (in my opinion) is the superior. Your white mare I take to be more of the species of an elephant than any other; and can carry houses or castles on her back. Tho', great as She is, Long Sutton might perhaps keep her under her feet. These two mornings I have rode out before breakfast. Your Greek was excellent, and (I think) with practice you may become a Thucydides. Dapple is in good health; and we have taken the liberty to desire him to honour us with following the little chaise. I hope all stock is pure well.

I am, dear brother,
Affectionately yours,
WILLIAM PITT.[2]

The contrast between the two letters proves that Chatham's influence must have overwrought the boy's brain and inflated his style. The letter to John evinces a joy in life natural to a boy of eleven, together with a wide range of interests and accomplishments.

That the writers of the period also did much to form the boy's style will appear from his first poem, "On the Genius of Poetry," which bears date May 1771.[1] It seems to be the joint product of Harriet and William Pitt:

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[1] "Chatham Corresp.," iv, 363.

[2] Pitt MSS., 101. The disuse of past participles was a characteristic of that age. To write "rode" for "ridden" after the auxiliary verb was no more noticeable a defect than to walk unsteadily after dinner. One other early letter of Pitt's bears date 1772 at Lyme Regis, and refers to some fun which he and his brothers and sisters had had on a cutter yacht. Another letter undated, but in Pitt's round schoolboy hand, to a gentleman of Somerset, refers to sporting matters such as the lack of hares and the inability of his brother to catch those which he does start (Pitt MSS., 102).

Ye sacred Imps of thund'ring Jove descend,
Immortal Nine, to me propitious, bend
Inclining downward from Parnassus' brow;
To me, young Bard, some Heav'nly fire allow.
From Aganippe's murmur strait repair,
Assist my labours and attend my pray'r.
Inspire my verse. Of Poetry it sings.
Thro' *Her*, the deeds of Heroes and of Kings
Renown'd in arms, with fame immortal stand.
By *Her* no less, are spread thro' ev'ry land
Those patriot names, who in their country's cause
Triumphant fall, for Liberty and Laws.
Exalted high, the Spartan Hero stands,
Encircled with his far-renowned bands.
Whoe'er devoted for their country die,
Thro' *Her* their fame ascends the starry sky.
She too perpetuates each horrid deed;
When laws are trampled, when their guardians bleed,
That shall the Muse to infamy prolong
Example dread, and theme of tragic song.
Nor less immortal, than the Chiefs, resound
The Poets' names, who spread their deeds around.
Homer shall flourish first in rolls of fame;
And still shall leave the Roman Virgil's name;
With living bays is lofty Pindar crown'd;
In distant ages Horace stands renown'd.
These Bards, and more, fair Greece and Rome may boast,
And some may flourish on this British Coast.
Witness the man, on whom the Muse did smile,
Who sung our Parents' fall and Satan's guile,
A second Homer, favor'd by the Nine.
Sweet Spenser, Jonson, Shakspear the divine.
And He, fair Virtue's Bard, who rapt doth sing
The praise of Freedom and Laconia's King.
But high o'er Chiefs and Bards supremely great
Shall Publius shine, the Guardian of our state.
Him shall th' immortal Nine themselves record,
With deathless fame his gen'rous toil reward,
Shall tune the harp to loftier sounding lays
And thro' the world shall spread his ceaseless praise.
Their hands alone can match the Heav'nly strain
And with due fire his wond'rous glories sing.

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[1] From Mr. A. M. Broadley's MSS.

The poem, which is in William's handwriting, shows that by the age of twelve he had acquired the trick—it was no more—of writing in the style of Pope and Johnson. The lines remind us of the felicitous phrase in which Cowper characterized the output of that school:

> The click-clock tintinnabulum of rhyme.

But they show neatness of thought and phrase. In a word, they are good Johnsonese.

The same quality of sonorous ponderosity is observable in Pitt's letters of 3rd June 1771 to his uncle the statesman, Earl Temple, thanking him for a present, in which the names of Lyttelton and Coke are invoked. In the following sentences the trend of the boy's thoughts is very marked: "I revere this gift the more, as I have heard Lyttelton and Coke were props of the Constitution, which is a synonimous [*sic*] term for just Liberty." The "marvellous boy" ends by quoting part of a line of Virgil, which still more powerfully inspired him:

> avunculus excitat Hector.

The next year saw the production of a play, which he and his brothers and sisters acted at Burton Pynsent on 30th May 1772. Here again the motive is solely political: a King, Laurentius, on his way homeward, after a successful war, suffers shipwreck, and is mourned as dead. The news leads an ambitious counsellor, Gordinus, to plot the overthrow of the regency of the Queen; but his advances are repelled by a faithful minister, Pompilius —the character played by William Pitt—in the following lines:

> Our honoured Master's steps may guide her on,
> Whose inmost soul she knew; and surely she
> Is fitted most to fill her husband's throne,
> She, whom maternal tenderness inspires,
> Will watch incessant o'er her lovely son
> And best pursue her dear Laurentius' plans.

Pompilius warns the Queen of the plot of Gordinus, and persuades her to entrust her son Florus to his care in a sylvan retreat. Thither also Laurentius comes in disguise; for, after landing as a forlorn survivor, he hears of dangerous novelties that had poisoned men's minds and seduced the army from allegiance to the Queen. Pompilius, while visiting the royal heir, sees and recognizes Laurentius brings him to Florus, and prepares to overthrow the traitors. In due course the King's adherents defeat the forces of Gordinus, who is slain by Laurentius himself, while Pompilius, his standard bearer, kills another arch-conspirator. The King grants a general pardon in these lines:

> Us it behoves, to whom by gracious Heav'n
> The cares of nations and of States are giv'n—
> Us it behoves with clemency to sway
> That glorious sceptre which the gods bestow.
> We are the shepherds sent to tend the flock,
> Sent to protect from wrong, not to destroy.
> Oh! Florus! When thou govern'st our domains,
> Bear these thy father's precepts in thy mind.
> Thro' love control thy subjects, not thro' fear.
> The people's love the bulwark of thy throne.
> Give not thy mind to passion or revenge,
> But let fair Mercy ever sway thy soul.[1]

It is fairly certain that none of the children but William could have written these lines; and the fact that the mainspring of the action is political further stamps the play as his own. Some Spirit of the Future seems to have hovered over him, for the mental derangement of George III in 1788 brought to the front questions relating to a Regency not very unlike those sketched by the boy playwright. The sense of loyalty and devotion which informs the play was then also to guide Pitt's footsteps through a bewildering maze. Indeed this effusion seems almost like a marionette's version of the Regency affair: Laurentius is a more romantic George III, Pompilius quite startlingly foreshadows Pitt the Prime Minister, the Prince of Wales (an undutiful Florus) and Fox may pass for the conspirators; and the *motif* of the play twangs a mimic prelude to the intrigues of Carlton House. In the acting of the play the elder brother seems far to have surpassed William, who bore himself stiffly and awkwardly. Such was the testimony of young Addington, a lifelong friend, who saw the play acted on another occasion at Hayes.[2] The criticism is valuable as showing how ingrained in Pitt's nature was the shyness and *gaucherie* in public which were ever to hamper his progress.

Juvenile authorship has its dangers for a delicate child; and we are not surprised to find from notes left by his first tutor to Bishop Tomline that the half of Pitt's boyhood was beset by illnesses which precluded all attempt at study. But nothing stopped the growth of his mental powers, which Wilson summed up in the Platonic phrase, "Pitt seemed never to learn but merely to recollect." At the age of fourteen and a half, then, he was ripe for Cambridge. It is true that youths then entered the English Universities at an age fully as early as the Scottish lads who went from the parish school, or manse, straight to Edinburgh or Aberdeen. Charles James Fox, Gibbon, and the lad who became Lord Eldon, entered Oxford at fifteen. Wilberforce, who at seventeen went up from Hull to St. John's College, Cambridge, was probably the senior of most of the freshmen of his year; but the case of Pitt was even then exceptional.

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[1] By the kindness of the Countess Stanhope I was allowed to peruse this most interesting MS., which is preserved, along with many other Pitt treasures, at Chevening.

[2] Pellew, "Sidmouth," i, 28.

Cambridge on the whole enjoyed a better reputation than Oxford for steady work; but this alone does not seem to have turned the thoughts of the Earl of Chatham so far eastwards. He himself was an Oxford man, and the distance of Cambridge from Burton Pynsent, the usual abode of the family, would naturally have told in favour of Oxford.

The determining facts seem to have been that Wilson's companionship was deemed essential, and that he, as a graduate of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, turned the scale in favour of his own college. This appears from Wilson's letter of 2nd December 1772 to his wife:

> I could not have acted with more prudence than I have done in the affair of Pembroke Hall. Mr. Pitt is not the child his years bespeak him to be. He has now all the understanding of a man, and is, and will be, my steady friend thro' life. . . . He will go to Pembroke, not a weak boy to be made a property of, but to be admir'd as a prodigy; not to hear lectures but to spread light. His parts are most astonishing and universal. He will be fully qualified for a wrangler *before he goes*, and be an accomplished classick, mathematician, historian and poet."[1]

How often have similar prophecies led to disappointment. In the case of the "wonderful boy," they did but point the way to a career whose meridian splendour has eclipsed the tender beauty of its dawn.

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[1] Ashbourne, *op. cit.*, 7-8.

CHAPTER II

AT CAMBRIDGE

A man that is young in yeares may be old in houres, if he have lost no time. But that happeneth rarely.—BACON.

ON 26th April 1773 Pitt's name was entered at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge; and he commenced residence there on 8th October 1773. His health being ever a matter of grave concern, Wilson stayed with him in order to prevent any boyish imprudences and accompany him in riding. But all precautions were in vain. Despite the invigorating influences of sea-air at Lyme Regis, where William and his brother had stayed from June up to 21st September, he soon fell ill at Cambridge, and remained in bed for several weeks. Thanks to the medical skill of Drs. Addington and Glynn (the former an old friend of Chatham), he gradually got the better of the hereditary foe, gout; but the letters which passed between Lady Chatham and Wilson attest the severity of the seizure. The boy seems to have won the love of his medical attendants, as appears from this sentence in her letter of 22nd November. "What a gift William has to conciliate the love of those who are once acquainted with him."

There is a story told to Thomas Moore by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, that Pitt brought his nurse with him in the carriage to Cambridge, and that she stayed to look after him. This strange assertion is made in the poet's diary for 13th February 1826; and the distrust which that late date inspires is increased when we find that the Bishop had the anecdote from Paley, who "was very near being his [Pitt's] tutor, instead of Pretyman, but Paley did not like it."[1] As Paley was at Christ's, and there never was any question of Pitt entering at that college or receiving from the outset regular instruction outside the walls of Pembroke, the story lacks every element of credibility.

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[1] "Diary of Thomas Moore," vol. v.

The facts are as follows: Mrs. Sparry, who was attendant or housekeeper at Burton Pynsent, went to Cambridge to nurse the boy through his long and serious illness, and finally brought him home. At last the invalid was strong enough to bear the journey. Four days were taken up in reaching London; and we find him writing thence to his mother on 6th December that he had not been fatigued and felt strong enough to walk all the way home; but, he added, Mrs. Sparry urged him not to write much.[1] He did not return to Cambridge ("the evacuated seat of the Muses" as Chatham styled it) until 13th July 1774. Then he informed Lady Chatham that Cambridge was empty, that Dr. Glynn had called on him and had inquired after Mrs. Sparry, who would be glad to hear that the bed at his rooms had been well aired. These trifles enable us to reduce the oft quoted nurse story to its proper insignificance.

Wilson seems to have done his best to amuse his charge in the dreary vacation time of July—September 1774; for on 24th August Pitt described to his mother a ride in which Wilson and he had lost their way among lanes and fields and regained the track with some damage to hedges, and after a chase of one of the steeds, but far too late to share in college dinner. Again, on 1st September, he wrote to the Earl of Chatham: "The ardour for celebrating this day is as great at Cambridge as anywhere; and Mr. Wilson himself, catching a spark of it, signalized himself by killing a crow on the wing after a walk of six hours."[2]

The natural vivacity of disposition, which charmed all his friends, must have played no small part in the recovery of his health. The medical authorities of to-day would also probably assign more importance to regular hours, exercise, and careful diet than to the use of port wine, adopted in compliance with his physicians' recommendation, on which some contemporary writers dwell with much gusto. Certain it is that from the year 1774 onwards "his health became progressively confirmed."

This phrase occurs in the biography of Pitt written by his college tutor, Dr. Pretyman, whose style it aptly characterizes. The book is indeed one of the most ponderous ever published. As tutor, friend, and adviser, the Rev. Dr. Pretyman had unique opportunities for giving to the world a complete and life-like portrait. Pitt was entrusted to his care and to that of his colleague, Dr. Turner, in 1773-4, and thereafter to Pretyman alone. The undergraduate soon conceived for him an affection which was strong and lasting. Their intercourse suffered little interruption, not even from the ecclesiastical honours which the young Prime Minister so freely bestowed on his old tutor. The bishop, who in 1803 took the name of Tomline, continued to be the friend and adviser of the Statesman up to the dreary days which succeeded the death-blow of Austerlitz. Pitt died in his arms, and he was his literary executor. Yet, despite the mass of materials put into his hands (or was it because of their mass?)[1] he wrote one of the dullest biographies in the English language.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 11.

[2] *Ibid.*

The solution of the riddle may perhaps be found in the cast of his mind, which was that of a mathematician and divine, while it lacked the gifts of interest in men and affairs, of insight into character, of delicate and instinctive sympathy, and of historic imagination, which enliven, reveal, interpret, and illuminate personalities and situations. Talleyrand, with a flash of almost diabolical wit, once described language as a means of *concealing* thought. Tomline, with laboured conscientiousness, seems to have looked on biography as a means of concealing character. Certainly he portrayed only those features which are easily discernible in the tomes of the Parliamentary History. An almost finnikin scrupulousness clogged him in the exercise of the scanty powers of portraiture with which Nature had endowed him. The biographer was continually being reined in by the literary executor, the result being a progress, which, while meant to be stately, succeeds only in being shambling. Here and there we catch glimpses of Pitt under the senatorial robes with which his friend adorned and concealed him, but they are tantalizingly brief. The Bishop was beset by so many qualms concerning the propriety of mentioning this or that incident as to "suppress many circumstances and anecdotes of a more private nature," and to postpone the compilation of a volume on this more frivolous subject. Death supervened while the Bishop was still revolving the question of the proprieties; and we shall therefore never fully know Pitt as he appeared to his life-long counsellor.[2]

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[1] One remembers here the terrifying remark of Lord Acton that the mass of documents which the modern historian must consult inevitably tells against style.

[2] See an interesting fragment, "Bishop Tomline's Estimate of Pitt," by

There must have been sterling qualities in the man whom the statesman thus signally honoured. Dr. Pretyman's learning was vast. Senior Wrangler and Fellow of his College, he also became a Fellow of the Royal Society; and his attainments in the classics enabled him to command the respect of his pupil in a sphere where, according to Wilson, Pitt had the Platonic gift, not of learning, but of instinctive remembrance (*ἀνάμνησις*). Nevertheless, nearly all contemporaries seem to have found in the tutor and Bishop a primness and austerity which were far from attractive. Perhaps he lacked the vitality which might have energized that mass of learning. Or else the consciousness that he was a Senior Wrangler, together with the added load of tutorial and episcopal responsibility, may have been too much for him. To Pitt, nurtured amidst the magniloquence of Hayes and Burton Pynsent, the seriousness and pedantry of Pretyman doubtless appeared natural and pleasing. To outsiders they were tedious; and the general impression of half-amused, half-bored wonderment is cleverly, though spitefully, expressed in the lines of the *Rolliad*:

> Prim preacher, prince of priests and prince's priest,[1]
> Pembroke's pale pride, in Pitt's *praecordia* placed,
> Thy merits all shall future ages scan,
> And prince be lost in parson Pretyman.

Among the most interesting parts of the bishop's biography of Pitt are those in which he describes his attainments, and his studies at Pembroke Hall. The tutor found him, as Wilson expected, exceedingly well versed in the classics, so that he seldom met with any difficulties. Chatham had prescribed a careful study of Thucydides and Polybius; and the young undergraduate was often able, with little or no preparation, to translate six or seven pages of the former historian, without making more than one or two mistakes. This is very remarkable in a youth of fifteen; but his sense of the meaning and fitness of words seems to have been not less instinctive than his choice of language, which was soon to arouse the wonder and admiration of the most experienced debaters at Westminster.

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the Earl of Rosebery (London, 1903), also in the "Monthly Review" for August 1903.

[1] Dr. Pretyman was chaplain to George III, and later on Bishop of Lincoln and Dean of St. Paul's.

As regards his mathematical attainments, Tomline states that he had already read the first six books of Euclid, and had mastered the elementary parts of Algebra, Trigonometry, and Natural Philosophy. The bent of his mind was towards the Humanities; but he had a good hold on mathematics, and became expert at the solution of problems. Newton's *Principia* aroused his deepest admiration. Various notes on mathematical and astronomical subjects extant in the Pitt Papers (too fragmentary for reproduction here) show that he retained his interest in the exact sciences.[1]

At Cambridge, above all, he deepened his knowledge of the classics. The ease with which he deciphered so obscure a work as Lycophron's "Cassandra" astonished even those who were familiar with his exceptional powers. Everything therefore conduced to give him an exceedingly wide and thorough knowledge of the literatures of Greece and Rome; for, fortunately for him, he had neither the need nor the inclination to bestow much time on the art of versifying in those languages, which absorbed, and still absorbs, so much of the energy of the dwellers by the Cam. Accordingly the life, thought, and statecraft of Athens and Rome became thoroughly familiar to him. His love for their masterpieces of art and imagination was profound; and the many comments in his handwriting on the margin of the chief authors suffice to refute the gibe of certain small-minded opponents, that he kept up his acquaintance with the classics in order to find tags for his speeches.[2] To some extent, it is true, his studies were directed towards his future vocation. At the wish of the Earl of Chatham, he bestowed great attention on the oratory of the ancients; and he seems to have bettered the precept by making critical notes on the speeches which he read, and remarking how the various arguments were, or might be, answered. Add to this a close and loving perusal of Shakespeare and Milton, and it will be seen that Pitt's studies at Cambridge were such as invigorated the mind, cultivated his oratorical gift, and thoroughly equipped him for the parliamentary arena.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 196. The notes and diagrams refer to the movement of bodies considered dynamically: there are also some problems in algebra. More numerous are the notes on English History, especially on the parliamentary crises of the years 1603-27, where, unfortunately, they break off. I have also found notes on Plutarch, and translations of the speech of Germanicus in Tacitus ("Annals," Bk. I), and of parts of the Second Philippic.

[2] His books went in large measure to Bishop Pretyman (Tomline), and many of them are in the library of Orwell Park.

From Tomline we glean a few details which enable us to picture the young undergraduate in his surroundings. He states that his manners even at that early age were formed and his behaviour manly, that he mixed in conversation with unaffected vivacity and perfect ease. His habits were most regular; he never failed to attend morning and evening chapel except when prevented by ill health. Owing to his father's habit of reading aloud a chapter of the Bible every day, his knowledge of the Holy Scripture was unusually good. Tomline mentions a circumstance which will serve also to illustrate Pitt's powers of memory and fine sense of sound. On hearing his former tutor read portions of Scripture in support of his "Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles," the statesman (it was in that anxious year, 1797) stopped him at one text with the remark—"I do not recollect that passage in the Bible, and it does not sound like Scripture." He was right: the passage came from the Apocrypha, which he had not read.

The singular correctness of Pitt's life while at Cambridge exposed him to the risk of becoming a bookworm and a prig. From this he was saved by his good sense and his ill-health. "The wonderful boy" was begged by his parents not to court the Muses too assiduously. Chatham's fatherly anxiety and his love of classical allusions led him to run this metaphor to death; but the strained classicisms had the wished for effect. Pitt rode regularly and far. In the Pitt Papers (No. 221) I have found proof that, while at Cambridge, he was trained in the then essential art of fencing. At a later date his old fencing-master, Peter Renaud, sent to him a petition stating that he had "had the honour of teaching you when you was at Pembroke College," and that in consequence of the decline in the habit of fencing, he was now in poverty, and therefore begged for help from his illustrious pupil.

We clutch at these trifles which show the drift of Pitt's early habits; for the worthy Tomline, who had stacks, where we have only sheaves, does not condescend to notice them. From the Pitt Papers we can, however, in part reconstruct his Cambridge life. In his first term, Pitt described Pembroke as "a sober, staid college, and nothing but solid study there." Fortunately, too, no exceptional privileges were accorded to Chatham's favourite son. The father in his letter to the tutor had not claimed any, except those required on the score of health. Consequently though Pitt had the right to don the gorgeous gown of a "gentleman-commoner" (afterwards called "fellow commoner"), he did not do so. In his first letter to his father he stated that his cap was "to be stripped of its glories, in exchange for a plain loop and button."[1] It is further pleasing to know that his father wished him not to make use of that tattered mediaeval privilege which allowed sons of noblemen to receive the degree without sitting for examination; and that persistent ill-health alone led him to resort unwillingly to this miserable expedient.

We are here reminded of Wordsworth's reference to the sense of social equality to be found at Cambridge, even at a time when titled arrogance and old-world subservience ramped and cringed unchecked and unrelieved in most parts of the land. The lines are worthy of quotation because they show that the spirit prevalent at Cambridge, at least at St. John's College, prepared the poet to sympathize with the French democracy. He speaks of Cambridge as

> A Republic, where all stood thus far
> Upon equal ground, that we were brothers all
> In honour, as in one community,
> Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
> Distinction open lay to all that came,
> And wealth and titles were in less esteem
> Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.

We do not know whether Pitt's feelings at this time were akin to those of Wordsworth, who entered St. John's in 1787. Pitt's surroundings were not such as to favour the infiltration of new ideas. In his first two years he mixed scarcely at all with undergraduates, and even after 1776 his circle seems to have been limited, doubtless owing to his intense shyness, ill-health, and constant association with Dr. Pretyman. On 4th November 1776 he writes home that he had been spending a few days at the house of Lord Granby (the future Duke of Rutland), and had returned to the "sober hours and studies" of college; but he rarely refers to pastimes and relaxations.

His letters also contain few references to study; but one of these is worthy of notice. On 10th November 1776 he asked permission to attend a month's course of lectures on Civil Law for the fee of five guineas; and later on he stated that they were "instructive and amusing," besides requiring little extra work. In that term he took his degree in the manner aforesaid. Early in 1777 he moved to other rooms which were small but perfectly sheltered from wind and weather. About that time, too, he launched out more freely into social life, so we may judge from the not infrequent requests for increased supplies. On 30th June 1777 he writes that he has exceeded his allowance by £60, the first sign of that heedlessness in money matters which was to hamper him through life.

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[1] "Chatham Corresp.," iv, 289.

The chief feature of interest in these early letters is the frequent references to the politics of the time, which show that he kept the service of his country steadily in view. Thus, on 23rd March 1775 during vacation time at Hayes, he writes to his brother, begging him, if he leaves his pillow before noon, to find out the fate of Mr. Burke's motion on behalf of conciliation with America. He signs the letters on behalf of "the Society at Hayes," possibly a reference to a family debating club.[1] It is noteworthy that the struggle of the American colonists with George III was the first political event to arouse his interest, which must have been heightened by the fervid speeches of Chatham on the subject. A little later a side eddy must have set in, for his elder brother, Lord Pitt, on receiving his commission in 1774, joined his regiment, which was quartered successively at Quebec and Montreal. On 31st May 1775 William writes from Cambridge that the papers are full of the bad news from Boston, doubtless the fight at Lexington. Ten days later he requests Lady Chatham to send, along with the "Ethics," Davenant on "Peace, War, and Alliance," as it is not in any library in Cambridge. Clearly, then, the youth was alive to the legal and international questions then at stake.

Probably these wider interests carried him more into society. His friendship with Lord Granby, then an undergraduate, is more than once referred to; and thus was formed that connection which furthered Pitt's career, and led to the sending of Lord Granby (after succeeding to the Dukedom of Rutland) to the Viceregal Lodge at Dublin. The Duke, it may be mentioned, bequeathed to Pitt the sum of £3,000.[1] Friendships formed at the University counted for much in times when court and governmental influence made or marred a man's career. We may therefore note that as Pitt's health improved during the last years at Cambridge, he also became friendly with the following: Lord Westmorland, Lord Euston, Lowther (Lord Lonsdale), Pratt (Lord Camden), Pepper Arden, Eliot, Bankes, Long, and St. John.

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[1] Chevening MSS.

The name of him who was perhaps Pitt's dearest friend is here conspicuous by its absence. Wilberforce saw little of Pitt at Cambridge, partly, perhaps, because he did not enter at St. John's College until 1776 and then became associated with a dissolute set; but he made Pitt's acquaintance towards the end of their time there, and the youths were mutually attracted by their brilliant conversational gifts and intellectual powers, which were to be sharpened by delightful intercourse at London and Wimbledon. In a passage penned in 1821, Wilberforce contrasts the comparative ill fortune of Pitt with the good fortune of his rival, Charles James Fox, who at Oxford made the acquaintance of a number of brilliant young men, Sheridan, Windham, Erskine, Hare, General Fitzpatrick, and Lord John Townshend. Nearly all of these, it is true, won distinction in public life; but it is scarcely fair to say that Pitt's Cambridge friends (to whose number Wilberforce adds Lords Abercorn and Spencer) were deficient in parts. Their gifts, if less brilliant, were more solid than those of Fox and Sheridan. Lords Camden and Westmorland were to prove themselves able administrators, and the future Duke of Rutland, though showy and dissolute, displayed much ability as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Bankes "the precise" (as the *Rolliad* terms him) was a hard-hitter in debate; while the gentler qualities of Eliot endeared him both to Pitt and to his sister Harriet, whom he married in 1785.

Viewing the question more widely, we may surmise that Pitt's career at Cambridge would have been more fruitful had he gone up somewhat later and mixed more with undergraduates, especially with good talkers. In that case we can imagine that the Grenville stiffness in him would almost have vanished. A *bon vivant* like Fox or North he could never have been; but the austerity of his life at Cambridge, save in its closing months, did not tend to cure him of the awkward shyness which Wilberforce noted as so prominent a trait in his character;[1] and thus he went forth into the life of Westminster weighted with that serious defect, an incapacity for making a wide circle of friends or winning over enemies. In a sense it may be said that Pitt took political life too seriously. He prepared for it from boyhood so strenuously as partly to stunt his social faculties, and thereby handicap himself for life. For in that age the political arena was the close preserve of the nobles, gentry, and nabobs, with whom a statesman could scarcely succeed unless he had the manners of the clubs and the instincts of a sportsman. A compromise between Lord Chatham and Tony Lumpkin would have made the ideal leader. As it was, there entered on the scene a compromise between Chatham and Aristides.

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[1] Pretyman MSS., quoted by Lord Ashbourne, *op. cit.*, 31, note.

Pitt's chief relaxation from the "sober studies" at Pembroke Hall was found in visits to the great debates at Westminster. The first of these visits belongs to the month of January 1775, when his father was pleading passionately for conciliation with America. Benjamin Franklin, the champion of the colonists, was present; and the orator clearly aimed at persuading our kinsmen beyond the seas that they had the sympathy of very many British hearts. Those two orations echoed far and wide amid the dales of New England and the rocks of the Alleghanies. What, then, must have been the effect of the living voice and of that superb presence, which trebled the power of every word, on a sensitive youth whose being ever thrilled responsive to that of his father? Language failed him to express his feelings. "Nothing prevented his speech," so he wrote to his mother, "from being the most forcible that can be imagined, and [the] Administration fully felt it. The manner and matter both were striking; far beyond what I can express. It was everything which was superior; . . . his first speech lasted above an hour and the second half an hour—surely the two finest speeches that ever were made, unless by himself."[2] He heard also Chatham's great effort of 30th May 1777, and describes it as marked by "a flow of eloquence and beauty of expression, animated and striking beyond expression."

For Pitt, indeed, the chief delights of the vacations centred in

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[1] "Private Papers of W. Wilberforce," 65.

[2] "Chatham Corresp." iv, 376, 377.

St. Stephens. Never has there been a more eager listener to the debates; and here his method of studying the orators of Greece and Rome enabled him quickly to marshal the arguments of a speaker, assess them at their real worth, and fashion a retort. During one of his visits to the House of Lords he was introduced to Charles James Fox, already famous as the readiest debater in the Lower House. The Whig leader afterwards described the rapt attention with which the youth at his side listened to the speeches of the peers, and frequently turned to him with the remark: "But surely, Mr. Fox, that might be met thus," or "Yes; but he lays himself open to this retort." Little can Fox have imagined that these gifts, when whetted by maturity, were frequently to dash the hopes of the Whigs.[1]

The nice balancing of arguments, and the study of words, together with the art of voice production, may make a clever and persuasive speaker; but a great orator is he to whom such things are but trifling adornments, needful, indeed, for a complete equipment, but lost amidst the grander endowments of Nature, imagination and learning. Pitt excelled in the greater gifts no less than in the smaller graces. He had the advantage of a distinguished presence, a kindling eye, a sonorous voice; and to these excellences were added those of the mind, which outshone all adventitious aids. And these intellectual powers, which give weight to attack and cover a retreat, were cultivated with a wholeheartedness and persistence unparalleled in our annals. The pompous greetings of the Earl of Chatham to "the civilians and law of nations tribe" at Pembroke Hall show the thoroughness of his son's application to law. It also seems probable that during the latter part of his stay at Cambridge he widened his outlook on public affairs by a study of Adam Smith's great work, "The Wealth of Nations," which appeared in 1776. He afterwards avowed himself a disciple of Adam Smith; and it is questionable whether he would have had time after leaving Cambridge thoroughly to master that work.

Books which bore upon the rise and fall of States seem to have engaged his attention, as was also the case with the young Napoleon—witness his copious notes on changes of dynasty and revolutions. In truth, those questions were then "in the air." In 1748 Montesquieu had published his "Spirit of Laws";

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[1] Macaulay, "Miscellaneous Writings" (Essay on William Pitt).

Rousseau had brought out in 1762 his "Social Contract," which Quinet has described as the seed of the French Revolution. Whether Pitt perused these works is doubtful; but it is clear that in his reading he had an eye for the causes that make or mar the fortunes of nations. Witness the remark in his letter of 19th March 1778, that nowhere in history could he find "any instance of a Nation so miserably sacrificed as this has been."[1] He shared the general conviction that none but Chatham could steer the ship of State into safe waters; and deep must have been his concern when the King refused to hear of Chatham forming a new Ministry for the purpose of conciliation. No consideration, not even the loss of his Crown (so he wrote to Lord North) would induce him to "stoop to the Opposition."[2]

Such conduct bordered on the insane now that France had made common cause with the United States; but there was no means of forcing the King's hand. The majority in Parliament supported his Minister, Lord North; and little could be expected from the Earl of Chatham in view of his growing infirmities of mind and body. His haughty and exacting ways no less than his inconsistencies of aim had scattered his following; and it was but a shadow of a name that appeared in the House of Lords on 7th April 1778. Encased in flannel, looking deadly pale, but with something of the old gleam in his eyes, he entered, staying his tottering frame on his sons, William and James. He spoke twice, urging the House not to debase the monarchy by conceding full independence to America, still less by giving way before France. "Shall this great kingdom now fall prostrate before the House of Bourbon? If we must fall, let us fall like men." Much of the speech was inconsistent with his former opinions; but the peers recked not of inconsistency; they listened with bated breath to words which recalled the glorious days of 1759—words which were to be prophetic both for himself and for his son. A second oratorical effort was too much for his overwrought frame. He pressed his hand to his heart and fell. The peers hard by caught him in their arms; his sons hurried up and helped to bear him to a house in Downing Street. Thence he was removed to Hayes, and there on 11th May 1778, in the midst of his family, he passed away.

[1] Macaulay, "Miscellaneous Writings" (Essay on William Pitt), iv, 510.

[2] "Corresp. of George III with Lord North," ii, 154 (17th March 1778).

For the greatest statesman and orator of his age there could be but one place of sepulture. The House of Commons unanimously voted an address for a public funeral and a monument in Westminster; and probably of all Englishmen there was only one who regretted the decision. George III had revealed the pettiness of his nature when, in a letter to Lord North, he referred to Chatham's breakdown in the House of Lords as his "political exit." He now stated that, unless the inscription on the monument dwelt only on Chatham's influence in "rouzing the nation at the beginning of the last war," the compliment paid to the deceased statesman would be "rather an offensive measure" to him personally.[1] "The Court do everything with an ill grace," is William's description of the preparations for the funeral.[2] No one represented the King at the funeral on 9th June, a fact which gave to the ceremony the appearance of a great popular demonstration. It was the last of Chatham's triumphs.

Owing to the absence of the eldest son with his regiment, William was the chief mourner. Few of the beholders had any knowledge of his manifold gifts; and the crowds which gazed at the stately procession, as at the burial of England's glories and hopes, could not surmise that the slim figure following the hearse was destined to retrieve the disasters of the present and to link once more the name of Pitt with a great work of national revival.

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[1] "Corresp. of George III with Lord North," ii, 184.

[2] Pitt MSS., 12.

CHAPTER III

POLITICAL APPRENTICESHIP

> I cannot approve of the requisition, in the studies of future statesmen, of so much theoretical knowledge, by which young people are often ruined before their time, both in mind and body. When they enter into practical life, they possess indeed an immense stock of philosophical and learned material; but in the narrow circle of their calling this cannot be practically applied, and will therefore be forgotten as useless. On the other hand what they most needed they have lost: they are deficient in the necessary mental and bodily energy, which is quite indispensable when one would enter efficiently into practical life.—GOETHE.

THE lives of English statesmen have very rarely, if ever, been enervated by that excessive zeal for education which the great German thinker discerned as a possible danger for his fellow countrymen. Certainly to those who had drunk deep of the learning of Leipzig, Heidelberg, or Göttingen, the transference to a Staats-secretariat at Weimar, Cassel, or even at Berlin, must have been a life of sheer drudgery. Doubtless, the *doctrinaire* policy of many a Continental State sprang from the persistent attempts of some Pegasus in harness to rise again to the serene heights of his youthful contemplations. In England our youths did not meditate on the science of politics. Both Oxford and Cambridge displayed a maternal care lest the brains of the rising generation should overtax the bodies; and never was the unsullied spring of Helicon ruffled by draughts taken under compulsion. Gibbon's experience at Magdalen College in 1752-3, of the genial indifference of his first tutor, and the unblushing neglect of his successor, seems to have been quite normal; and it is clear that the curriculum of that wealthy corporation had not the remotest connection with any known form of activity outside its walls.

Pitt's residence at Cambridge was more fruitful for the future. The dons of Pembroke Hall seem to have taken their duties less lightly than was the rule elsewhere; and Pitt's lifelong gratitude to Dr. Pretyman may have been partly due to the unusual advancement in learning achieved under his watchful care. But even so, the regular studies had no bearing on the life of a statesman other than that which comes from an intelligent reading of the philosophers and historians of Greece and Rome. Pitt's choice of lectures on Civil Law was his own. And, after taking his degree in the autumn of 1776, he seems largely to have followed the bent of his mind, which, as we have seen, led him to study the crises in national affairs, and the causes of welfare or decay. It is significant that the young Napoleon Bonaparte approached historical study in the same practical way.

Above all, Pitt haunted the precincts of Westminster, and there learnt to view politics, not as a science, but a strife. For him, therefore, there was little risk of being hampered by an ill-digested mass of theoretical learning as he faced the ever shifting problems of the Commonwealth; still less of undergoing the transition from the breezy uplands of philosophy to the political mill of some petty principality. It is the happy lot of Britain's sons to come to ever widening spheres of activity; and their minds, never "sicklied o'er" at the outset, should possess the alertness and vigour which Goethe rightly praised as a better equipment than the best elaborated theories and the richest store of precedents. This natural course of development ought to produce not *doctrinaires*, but statesmen.

The chief misfortunes of Pitt's early life were his appalling precocity, which the Earl of Chatham in no wise checked, and the sense of responsibility thrust upon him all too soon by the terrible bereavement described above. As the eldest son was then abroad with his regiment, William was at once involved in a network of cares. The finances of the family were in an embarrassed state. Chatham's habits had been so lavish, and his conduct in official life so honourably scrupulous, that the estate was encumbered with debts. Parliament voted the sum of £20,000 towards their payment; but, if we may judge from one of the later letters of Lady Chatham, embarrassments at times continued to beset her.[1] William also inherited property which was to yield little more than an annual income of £250—a sum inadequate to meet the demands of an ambitious youth in an age when money no less than family standing served as the passport to a public career.

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[1] Ashbourne, *op. cit.*, 161, 162.

Nevertheless, the lack of resources seems to have stimulated energies that were ever braced by difficulty. About five months after the funeral of his father, we find him expressing to Lady Chatham his resolve to take rooms at Lincoln's Inn. In his view practice at the Bar was invaluable as a training for that wider and grander service to which he had early vowed himself.

In one important particular Pitt's conduct showed singular foresight. He did not, as might have been expected in days when travelling was slow and expensive, give up his rooms at Pembroke Hall, but for nearly two years he continued usually to reside there, even while keeping his terms at Lincoln's Inn. Extravagant though this arrangement seemed to be, it was based on prudential motives. In the miserable condition in which public affairs then were, he judged that a dissolution of Parliament could not be long deferred; and the chance of winning a seat at his University seemed to him, though still in his teens, greater than at an ordinary constituency, where the deep pockets of grandees or nabobs must mar his prospect.[1]

About Cambridge, then, his hopes fondly clustered, seeing that it was "a seat of all others the most desirable, as being free from expense, perfectly independent, and I think in every respect extremely honourable."[2] The words have the ring of manly determination which marks all his public utterances.

The following letter of his to Mr. John (afterwards Lord) Townshend, then one of the members for the University, marks the first official announcement of his intentions:

Pembroke Hall, July 15 1779.

DEAR TOWNSHEND,

The very earnest and sincere wishes I expressed for your success in the late contest for the University of Cambridge, might perhaps lead you to imagine that I should take a similar part on every future occasion. I was therefore very sorry that it was not in my power to explain to you my situation when I had the pleasure of seeing you here. But, having since finally determined to offer myself a candidate for the

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[1] See Porritt, "The Unreformed House of Commons," i, ch. ix, on the exclusion of poor men from Parliament.

[2] Letter of 3rd July 1779. Stanhope, i, 31.

University at the General Election, I am desirous of giving you immediate notice of a circumstance of which I imagine you will be glad to be apprised as soon as possible.

W. PITT.[1]

At the same time he informed his uncle, Earl Temple, of his resolve, and received the following reply. The italicizing of the Christian name speaks for itself:

Stowe, July 18 1779.

I cannot, my dear *William*, but interest myself most warmly in whatever relates to your honour or interest; I therefore learn with singular pleasure the hopes you conceive that the good old lady, the alma mater of Cambridge, may be inclined to treat you as her most favourite son. Such a testimony at your age from a learned body cannot but be very flattering. As to your prospect of success, I cannot form any opinion, being totally unacquainted with every circumstance but that of your merit. You must therefore be [*sic*] at present to receive from me nothing but sincere assurances of my best good wishes and readiness to serve you as may be in my power. How far it may be advisable for you before you have more ripened in your profession to launch out into the great ocean of politicks and expose yourself to the sweet music of those lovely syrens, which have already seduced your cousin Thomas from the destined and determined object of his life, is a matter of great doubt, and the reflection that it is so may prove some consolation to you should you not succeed. The memory of your father and the great character you have attained speak forcibly in your favour, but a dead minister, the most respectable that ever existed, weighs very light in the scale against any living one, at least if I may guess at your university by her good sister. All therefore I can say further is to recommend to you very thoroughly to examine the foundation of your hopes before you engage, not suffering your conduct to be warped by your wishes; because, if from the event this measure shall appear to be lightly taken up, such an outset in life will diminish much of those high expectations which you have so deservedly raised. Your young old friend and namesake salutes you very kindly and gratefully, Hester and Catherine very affectionately, without forgetting that antient spinster Mrs. Stapleton. We shall be happy to receive you here, candidate or no candidate. . . .[2]

TEMPLE.

Despite this response, Pitt resolved to persevere, and that too, though the political horizon had darkened owing to the declaration of war by Spain. At first he avowed his deep concern at this event; but the note of hopefulness, which is never long absent from his letters, soon begins to reassert itself in the expression of a belief that this new danger may "be productive of some good effects at home, and that there may still be spirit and resources in the country sufficient to preserve at least the remnant of a great empire." This forecast was justified. The struggle became one for national existence, waged against our hereditary rivals, the monarchs of the House of Bourbon; and the searchings of heart of England's sons, at warring against their own kith and kin, were in large measure stilled. The thrilling incidents that accompanied the three years' siege of Gibraltar by the Spaniards, our successes in India, and the naval triumphs of the closing years of the war showed the hardening of the nation's fibre under the strain of adversity and danger.

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[1] Chevening MSS.

[2] Pitt MSS., 182.

After residing at Burton Pynsent for some weeks in the autumn in order to reassure Lady Chatham while the invasion-scare was at its height, Pitt returned to Cambridge at the close of the year, and settled down at Lincoln's Inn in the early weeks of 1780. Thanks to the kindness of his uncle, Earl Temple, he had been able to procure a lease of rooms on the north side of the attic of staircase number 4 of Stone Buildings (those nearest to Holborn). The sum of £1,100, which in November 1778 he had pronounced "frightful," had been advanced on the property which Pitt was to inherit when he came of age.

Concerning Pitt's life at Lincoln's Inn we know next to nothing. The lack of official records of the Inns of Court, except unilluminating entries of dates, thwarts all efforts at reconstructing the early life of many famous men; and the denseness of the gloom which surrounds our institutions, academic and legal, is apt to provoke the investigator to unpatriotic reflections. Is there any French statesman of modern times about whose early career the records of the institutions with which he was associated are so scanty and uninteresting as are those of Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn concerning the life of the brilliant son of Chatham?

As it is, the investigator at Lincoln's Inn can discover little more than that Pitt was called to the Bar on 12th June 1780, and that on the next day a lease was taken out for his rooms for three "lives," namely, John, Earl of Chatham, aged 23, William Pitt, aged 21, and James Charles Pitt, aged 18. The rent was £9 9*s.* 10*d.* per annum.[1]

The great preoccupation of Pitt, apart from the ever-pressing topic of national danger, was the movement for Economic Reform. Originating at York in December 1779, it gathered volume until the petitioners in that county alone numbered more than 8,000 freeholders. East Anglia responded to the call of Yorkshire; and Pitt hoped to see London rally to the cause of purity and political freedom. If ever there was a chance of sweeping away the network of sinecures whereby the King kept his hold on the House of Commons, it was now, when the growth of debt and taxation rendered economy in non-essentials the most urgent of public duties.

In February 1780 Burke introduced his proposals for Economic Reform in a speech of great ability. He sought, firstly, to abolish the special jurisdictions in Wales and Cheshire and in the Duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall, which formed petty and extravagant and corrupt governments. The great orator, like a forensic *retiarius*, sought to enfold his great enemy, Corruption, within the cloak of humour which he thus deftly threw in front. Affecting the desire to free the royal prerogative from irritating and absurd local restrictions, he proceeded thus: "Cross a brook, and you lose the King of England, but you have some comfort in coming again under His Majesty, though shorn of his beams, and no more than Prince of Wales. Go to the north and you find him dwindled to a Duke of Lancaster. Turn to the west of that north, and he hops upon you in the humble character of the Earl of Chester." Equally difficult and important was Burke's attempt to reduce the Civil List and lessen the number of sinecures attached to the King's household. He sought to abolish the offices of Master of the Household, Treasurer, Comptroller, Cofferer, Treasurer of the Chamber, the whole Board of Green-Cloth, the Wardrobe and Jewel Offices, the Board of Works, and the Keepers of stag-hounds, buck-hounds, fox-hounds, and harriers, and other well-paid sinecures. With playful irony he described the clatter of white-sticks and yellow-sticks about the head of a reformer who would touch those offices, or sought to exclude the King's turnspit from Parliament. As regarded the Civil List, he proposed to fix its amount immutably, to transfer to the general fund accounts which had ceased properly to belong to the King's private purse, and to regulate the whole on business-like principles. He also urged the suppression of useless offices in the general administration, especially the newly created Secretaryship for the Colonies and the Board of Trade, the latter of which then formed a desirable sinecure for eight members of Parliament.[1] Most important of all, perhaps, was the proposal, brought in by Sir Philip Clerk, to exclude from Parliament contractors—a class which had been proved to have battened on the funds, and to have urged the continuance of the war.

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[1] "The Black Book of Lincoln's Inn," iv, Preface.

Had Burke's proposals stood in need of further vindication, it would have been supplied by the mysterious fate which befell them. Members of Parliament with scarcely an exception loudly commended the measure, and the eloquence and power with which Burke introduced it to the House. About the same time Lord Shelburne brought forward in the Upper House damning proofs of the greed of contractors and of the gross carelessness with which accounts were kept at the Admiralty and War Office.[2] The defence of ministers was strong only in personalities. Argument there was none; and it seemed that the whole festering sudd of corruption must be swept away by the flood of popular indignation.

From three of Pitt's letters, those of 9th and 26th February and 14th March 1780, we can imagine the high hopes of the young reformer as he listened to the scathing attack on Ministers by Lord Shelburne, and the comprehensive indictment framed by Burke. In the second letter he notes with joy the drop of the ministerial majority to two; and in the small hours of 14th March he was privileged to witness the stormy scene which occurred when Burke by a majority of eight carried his motion for abolishing the Board of Trade. And yet the sudd did not move. Despite the success of reformers in the House, and the growing excitement among their associations in the country, the clogging influences of the past prevailed. Members who praised Burke for his lofty and statesmanlike aims, voted in committee against the details of his scheme. Little by little it disappeared; and, in face of the greed, cowardice, or apathy of Parliament, Burke soon declared his indifference as to the fate of the few remaining clauses of his measure. The bill for the exclusion of contractors from Parliament passed the Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords.

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[1] "Life of Burke," by R. Bissett (1800), ii, 55-66.

[2] Fitzmaurice "Shelburne" iii 67-72

Another surprise was in store for the House and the country. On 6th April Mr. Dunning brought forward a motion that "the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be lessened." The motion was made suddenly and on the day when numerous petitions were laid on the table, signed by thousands of persons, on behalf of shorter parliaments and a larger addition to the representatives of counties who, as a rule, showed some independence. The proposal produced a great sensation. Ministers seemed to be "stunned." Pitt's relative, Thomas Pitt of Boccanoc, ably supported this daring motion. The Speaker himself left the chair and spoke in support of it, and the resolution, after a trifling change of form, was passed by a majority of eighteen. But again the forces of obscurantism triumphed. Apparently Dunning owed his success solely to the fear of the imminence of a general election, and as that fear lessened, so also did the numbers of the popular party in the House. North slowly but surely regained his hold on the waverers, and succeeded in defeating a motion begging the King not to dissolve or prorogue Parliament until steps had been taken to diminish the influence of the Crown at elections (24th April).

For the present Pitt stifled his disappointment at this fiasco by attendance at the opera and masquerades, so we may judge from his letters; but he probably hardened his resolve to effect the Reform of Parliament itself, which, as was now clear to all but Burke, must precede any attempt to cleanse the Augean stables of the Court and the Administration. That gifted thinker but somewhat erratic politician, whose character will concern us later, had gone so far as to defend the state of the representation and to urge reformers to concentrate their efforts on the task of freeing Parliament from the corrupt influences that were warping its character. To this belief he still clung, in spite of the recent damning proof that a Parliament of place-hunters and borough-mongers had refused to root out the canker of corruption, even at a time of great national danger. Pitt, for his part, looked for safety to that course of action which Chatham had so often taken; he turned away from Parliament and fixed his hopes in the nation. Even the oratory of Burke failed to satisfy him. He found in his great speech of 11th February not only "real beauties," but "ridiculous affectations." He added, however, in his letter of 14th March: "I have heard two less studied harangues from him since in reply that please me much more than this does now that it is upon paper." This criticism, coming from the son of Chatham, is a little surprising; but it may be considered symptomatic. As will appear later, there was something in Burke's temperament which jarred on the young statesman.

While disagreeing with Burke and the more academic wing of the reformers, Pitt did not consort with the men on the extreme left who now raised a great clamour through the country. He seems to have had no dealings at this time with the Reform or "Œconomic" Associations; and events now occurred which helped for a time to distract his attention from politics. While he was expecting to be called to the Bar, London fell a prey to the Lord George Gordon rioters (2nd to 9th June).

What must have been the disgust of the young patrician as he gazed at the scenes of rapine and drunkenness which went on under the name of Protestantism! The pretence of bigotry was soon flung aside, and then, when the thin crust of civilization was removed, men saw appalled the depths of villany that usually are hidden. For days the passions of the mob raged unchecked by timorous magistrates and ministers. The King alone was undismayed, and finally insisted on the use of vigorous measures. Thanks to his staunchness, the wheels of government began to move once more. Then the orgy quickly died down; but it left men with a dread of the newly-revealed Caliban, and a heightened respect for the one man whose firmness had ensured the vindication of law and order. How much the popular cause then suffered can never be known. When, in the course of the French Revolution, the Parisian mob carried the King and Queen from Versailles to Paris and completed its triumph at the harvest time of 1792, Englishmen viewed those events in the lurid light thrown by the flames of the Lord George Gordon riots; and it is probable that Pitt himself was no stranger to this feeling.

The cause of Parliamentary Reform in England also suffered untold harm. Why talk about manhood suffrage, vote by ballot and annual Parliaments, as the Westminster Committee had talked, when all around were proofs of the savagery of the many-headed monster? The Duke of Richmond, who then, along with

Fox, advocated a programme of reform which was to furnish the Chartists with their "six points," confessed in a letter to Shelburne that the riots "will tend to discredit any attempts of the people to do themselves justice on any future occasion when the cause may warrant it";[1] and though Charles James Fox retained his faith in the cause, yet he and all other democrats thenceforth found it a hopeless task to roll the stone up to the point to which the enthusiasm of the people carried it in the spring of 1780. After midsummer of that year the various committees and associations preached to deaf ears. The King had won.

To return to Pitt's fortunes, we may note that Lincoln's Inn had been in no immediate danger from the rioters, though surrounded with flames on all sides. In order to be ready for the worst, the benchers took arms and formed a corps, in which Pitt had his first experience of volunteering. The records of the Inn, however, show that it was also defended by 800 men of the Northumberland Militia, the sum of £364 12*s.* 0*d.* being paid for provisions to them for the ten days during which they were in garrison.[2]

The desire of the resident members of the Inn worthily to entertain the officers of that corps led to the appointment of a committee for that purpose, which included Pitt, Pepper Arden (afterwards Lord Alvanley), Mitford (afterwards Lord Redesdale), Bland Burges, and three others. The last named, in his reminiscences, tells how, when his turn came, he invited Gibbon and Lord Carmarthen to meet four officers and other company at dinner. The historian, as is well known, was a most entertaining talker, flitting easily from one topic to another, and lighting up all with sallies of wit which the listeners were expected to receive with deferential applause and unquestioning mirth. Judge then of his astonishment, when, after one of his best foreign anecdotes, which touched on "the fashionable levities of political doctrine then prevalent," a deep but clear voice was heard from the far end of the table calmly but civilly impugning the correctness of the story and the propriety of its political connexion. The applause ceased at once, and Gibbon turned his gaze petulantly on the slim youth who had dared to challenge his unquestioned supremacy, and sat there quietly eating grapes. As the interruption had been hailed with too much approval to be ignored or dismissed with a frown, he endeavoured to crush the youth by heavy artillery. A spirited fire came in return, and a sharp duel of wits began, which the company followed with the keenest interest. Finally the skill and vigour of the attack drove the historian from one position after another and left him defenceless; whereupon he left the room in high dudgeon. In vain did Bland Burges seek in the anteroom to calm his feelings and persuade him to return. "By no means," replied Gibbon; "that young gentleman is, I have no doubt, extremely ingenious and agreeable, but I must acknowledge that his style of conversation is not exactly what I am accustomed to, so you must positively excuse me." Meanwhile Pitt continued to hold forth on the topic in dispute, "which he discussed with such ability, strength of argument, and eloquence, that his hearers were filled with profound admiration."[1]

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[1] Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne," iii, 83.

[2] "Black Book of Lincoln's Inn," iv, Preface; "Bland Burges Papers," 58.

Such was the first recorded triumph of Pitt. Would that we knew more than the bare outlines of the discussion! But an unkind fate has vouchsafed here, as at so many points, enough of information to whet the appetite for more, enough to give us the merest glimpse of those surprising powers which easily discomfited Gibbon at his prime.

We know little about the extent of Pitt's legal attainments or his skill as a pleader. His practice was to last but a short time. Three days after the end of the riots he was called to the Bar and afterwards went on the Western Circuit, of which he was a member. As to the impression aroused by his pleading, I have found very few particulars except the statement in an almost contemporary biography that his first case, which must have been in London, was one concerning an East India trade dispute, and that he attracted the notice of Lord Mansfield on the Bench. He is said to have acted as junior counsel in several cases at Dorchester and Exeter, and to have commanded attention by the force of his reasoning rather than attracted it by playing upon the emotions. His style, in short, was clear and argumentative rather than "attractive and passionate."[2] From Exeter he was recalled in haste by news which was of far higher interest to him than the quarrels of Wessex squires and traders. The King had dissolved Parliament and had fixed 31st October for the date of assembly of its successor.

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[1] "Bland Burges Papers," 60, 61.

[2] "Life of William Pitt," by Henry Cleland (1807).

This action was what might have been expected from the most astute of electioneering agents. Disgust at the excesses of the Gordon rioters was still the dominant motive in the political world, and at such a time men looked askance at Reform. Further, in order to ensure the success of what he termed "my cause," George III condescended to the arts of the canvasser, entering the shop of a draper at Windsor, and saying in his quick peremptory way—"The queen wants a gown, wants a gown. No Keppel. No Keppel." Windsor rejected Keppel; Burke failed to keep his seat at Bristol; and Pitt made no impression whatever on the Toryism of the University of Cambridge. In any case his election was highly improbable. Dons and country clergymen are not wont to favour the claims of a young and unknown candidate; but the trend of thought at that time made his defeat certain.

He bore it with his usual serenity. "Mansfield and Townshend have run away with the prize," so he wrote on 16th September, "but my struggle has not been dishonourable." He now once more betook himself to legal affairs at Lincoln's Inn, but his thoughts still centred in Westminster. Despite the stagnation which marked our public life after the victory of the King and Lord North at the general election, the fate of the commonwealth drew Pitt to St. Stephen's for the earlier half of every day. His regular attendance at the House was perhaps instrumental in furthering his dearest hopes. The Duke of Rutland had been on cordial terms with Pitt at Cambridge; and he now mentioned the talents of his friend to Sir James Lowther. That magnate of Cumberland, who could secure the return of eleven candidates, welcomed the suggestion that Pitt should enter Parliament for one of his seats, and, with a generosity none too common among owners of "pocket boroughs," offered him a seat at Appleby unconditionally, save that he (Pitt) was to resign his seat if his political views should in the future become opposed to those of his patron.[1]

To this condition even the proud son of Chatham could not demur; and, though the connection with what was practically a pocket borough could not be quite palatable to a reformer, yet he doubtless remembered that his father first entered Parliament as member for Old Sarum.

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[1] As a rule, Lowther exacted strict obedience from his nominees. In 1788 he compelled them to vote against Pitt on the Regency Question.

While we smile at the vagaries of the old system, which enabled "the great commoner" to begin his public career as representative of an untenanted mound, and his son as member for a town which he did not even visit, let us remember that occasionally it opened a door easily for a man of genius. Gladstone, in his Tory years, eulogized the system on these grounds;[1] and it is certainly remarkable that, besides the two Pitts, many other famous men used these stepping-stones. Burke, through most of his public life, was member for a pocket borough, Wendover or Malton; and Canning entered Parliament as member for a scarcely discoverable village, Newtown, in the Isle of Wight. Fox and Peel also entered Parliament by similar means. However quaintly the old order of things misrepresented the British people, it did now and then help to bring brilliant men to the front with a speed that is no longer possible. But it is noteworthy that young men of spirit took care to be soon quit of pocket boroughs.[2]

Appleby having duly registered the decree of Sir James Lowther at the close of 1780, Pitt took his seat in the House of Commons on 23rd January 1781. From that time to the very same day in the year 1806 when he breathed his last, he was to expend his life in strenuous efforts throughout a quarter of a century which comprised such events as the close of the American War, the new grouping of the Powers of Europe, the French Revolution, and the rise of Napoleon.

[1] Hansard, cliii, 1056, 1057.

[2] Porritt, i, 315-7.

CHAPTER IV

AT WESTMINSTER AND GOOSTREE'S

A series of undesigned changes brought the English Constitution to such a condition that satisfaction and impatience, the two great sources of political conduct, were both reasonably gratified by it.—SIR HENRY MAINE.

IN the present age, marked by peaceful relations between the different parts of the Empire and by complete accord between the sovereign and his people, it is difficult to realize the condition of public affairs at the time when Pitt entered Parliament. The war with the United States, France, Spain and Holland, threatened the ruin of the nation, and it further brought to a climax a constitutional crisis of great importance. That struggle had resulted in no small measure from the personal methods of rule of George III; and, despite the disastrous influence of that policy on the Empire, there was still the chance of its winning at Westminster.

The reason for this paradox is to be found in the composition of the House of Commons and in the character of the King. Ten years had elapsed since the publication of Burke's indictment, that, whereas in the previous century the distempers of monarchy had been the chief cause for fear, now the main apprehension centred in the distempers of Parliament.[1] The facts given above, and those soon to be set forth, will show that the danger was still acute. The rallying of practically the whole of the Tory party to the King's side, the division of the Whigs into two chief groups, neither of which had any definite programme, the enormous power which the monarch wielded over the members of the Lower House by means of "influence," and, last but not least, the revival of his prestige owing to the Lord George Gordon crisis, all served to strengthen his hand even against reformers who struggled for peace abroad and economy and purity in the administration.

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[1] Burke, "Thoughts on the present Discontents" (1770).

In fact, the disintegration of the party system and the corruption of the House of Commons had provided George III with a most favourable opportunity for realizing the ideals set forth in Bolingbroke's "Patriot King." The old parties had for the time lost their *raison d'être.* All but a few fossilized Tory squires had given up the cause of the Stuarts. The Whigs could no longer claim to be defenders of the House of Brunswick and the liberties of England. For more than a century they had settled down comfortably on the spoils of office, until the sight of their magnates affecting to slay the slain and battening on the nation's spoils aroused general resentment. Of this feeling the King had made dexterous use. In the name of the nation he claimed to set aside the parties and govern in the interests of the whole. As generally happens in such cases, he called into being another party, the King's Friends, which, under the guise of acting for the nation, gradually ensured the subservience of Parliament to the royal will. By dint of honours, places, and money, the new policy won its way, until, as we have seen, it could defy the efforts for Reform. To the eye of alarmed patriots it seemed that the House of Commons would soon be little more than a tool of the King, and that George III would succeed in the enterprise which had cost Charles I his head.

There were some grounds for these fears. George III was on the whole a more formidable opponent than the first Charles. While lacking the personal charm of the Stuart sovereign and his power of calling forth enthusiastic service, he far excelled him in common sense and the power of adapting means to ends. Both men believed thoroughly in their cause, struggled with obstinate persistence towards the goal, and yet showed great finesse in the use to which they put men and events. Outwardly and mentally, they had nothing in common. Yet the parallel between them is closer than would at first sight appear. In a political sense George III is a rather gross replica of Charles I. Even the highest of Anglicans has never been tempted to canonize him; for, in truth, he lived in a material age, and had too great a belief in material interests ever to be in danger of "martyrdom."

Here, perhaps, lay the real danger to the liberties of England in the decade, 1770-80. They are more likely to be undermined by an appeal to material interests than by an open attack. Charles was foolish enough to assail both the consciences and the pockets of his subjects. George left consciences alone, and made use of the pockets of the governing classes to achieve his ends. This sapping process was more likely to succeed than a hasty attack above ground. The policy of Charles I braced men to resistance; that of George III drugged and enervated them.[1] Early in the seventeenth century Parliament was the champion of the nation's liberties; now there was some fear that it might degenerate into a King's Council. Parliament is but the register of the nation's will; and torpor at St. Stephen's bespoke political deadness throughout the land. Here, perhaps, was the most threatening symptom of all. The attempt to manipulate Parliament could come near to success only in an age of high living and plain thinking. Even the disasters of the American War did not awaken England at once. Her monitor was sleeping the sleep of surfeit. What were defeats on the other side of the Atlantic to the members for the pocket boroughs who virtually controlled the House for the King's cause? To what effect was it that London and Westminster now and again chafed at the losses of the war, when those cities returned only eight members, as against Cornwall's forty-four? Episodes like those connected with the names of Wilkes and Lord George Gordon roused for a time storms of tropical violence; but when they died down there ensued long and enervating lulls. All went on once more as in a land of lotus-eaters, who scarcely heeded the dim mutterings that came across the western ocean. Even the disaster at Yorktown, which virtually ended the American War, did not thoroughly arouse the nation. Two months after the receipt of that news, Romilly wrote to a friend, "The nation seems fallen into a deep sleep."[2]

The distributor of the soporific fruit seemed to be equal to every emergency. Lord North was a coarse and heavy man, with a wide mouth, thick lips, and puffy cheeks, which seemed typical of his policy. He resembled Walpole in his knowledge of men's foibles and contempt of humanity. True, he excelled him in affability; but he signally fell behind him in the sterner qualities which master men and beat down obstacles. For eleven years he had been chief Minister of the Crown, latterly much against his will; and for fourteen months more the imperious monarch was to hold him to his post.

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[1] For details of bribery see May, "Constitutional History," i, 315-27; Porritt, i, 414-20.

[2] "Life of Romilly," i, 141.

With Lord North were associated in the year 1781 men who were fully contented with the task of supervising their own departments and the patronage belonging to them. The most noteworthy of these Ministers were Lord Thurlow, a man of low tastes and violent temper, but considerable gifts for intrigue, who acted officially as Lord Chancellor and unofficially as chief of "the King's friends"; Earl Bathurst, Lord President; Germain (Viscount Sackville), Secretary of State for the Colonies; Lord Townshend, Master of the Ordnance; Mr. Jenkinson (afterwards the Earl of Liverpool), Secretary at War; the Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty; the Earl of Carlisle, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland; and Mr. William Eden (afterwards Lord Auckland), Chief Secretary at Dublin Castle. The personality of some of these men will appear more fitly in the sequel. Here we may note that they resembled highly paid confidential clerks, working under the general direction of the King, rather than responsible Ministers. Of collective action and responsibility there was little under Lord North.[1] George III acted on the principle that had guided the Caesars, *Divide et impera.*

Such, in brief, was the system and such were the men who now had to confront a world in arms. Apart from the interminable conflict in America, the area of strife was spreading in Europe; for the Dutch, incensed by our maritime policy, were on the point of declaring war. In India Hyder Ali was ravaging the Carnatic; and Britons, looking forth in fear from Madras, could see the clouds of smoke that told of his devastations. In the Mediterranean Gibraltar still stoutly held out against the Franco-Spanish forces, but our possession, Minorca, was soon to fall. In the Baltic the League of the Armed Neutrality held the sword dangling over Briton's commerce, and was kept from striking only by the skill of Sir James Harris, our envoy at St. Petersburg, in playing on the foibles of Catharine II.

Yet against most of these difficulties British energy ultimately made headway; and they did not at present disturb the course of events in Parliament, with which we are here more especially concerned. The Opposition was divided into two chief groups, which had not yet begun to coalesce under the pressure of national calamity. The larger of these was the official Whig party under the nominal leadership of the Marquis of Rockingham, an affable and tactful man, with little strength of character, formidable only from his connections with the great Whig Houses. Among his followers two men stood forth, of powers so great and varied as to claim our attention at once. These were Fox and Burke.

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[1] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 37, 38.

Charles James Fox (1749-1806), the second son of Lord Holland, was now in the prime of his powers. Nature had dowered him with gifts so rich and varied as not to have been seriously marred even by the dissipations into which his father had encouraged him to plunge before he left Eton. While at Hertford College, Oxford, he gave proofs of his eager, vivacious, lovable temperament, and imbibed that passion for the classics and for all great literature which was to be his solace through life. Well would it have been for him had this been his only passion; unfortunately he never shook off the vices contracted in youth. His amour with Mrs. Armstead was notorious and avowed. Equally harmful was his mania for gambling. Many a time he ruined his speeches in the House by the fatigue or annoyance due to the losses of an all-night sitting at Brooks's. But whether he lost or won, whether caressed by Ministers in Parliament or turned out of his rooms in St. James's Street by Jews and bailiffs,[1] he was ever beloved, even by those whom he belaboured in the House.

His oratorical gifts were the outcome of a powerful mind, and they were enhanced by a melodious voice and forcible action. Perhaps the greatest charm of his speeches was their ease and naturalness. He spoke as if without premeditation, and at times he indulged in repetitions and digressions to an unpardonable extent. But all such faults and occasional carelessness in the choice of words scarcely lessened the effect of his efforts, which seemed to his hearers to be above all art. The unfailing vigour of thought, the power with which he could first recapitulate the arguments of his opponents and then tear them in pieces, and the good humour, which rarely left him even in his most scornful moods, served alike to convince and captivate the House. He was the prince of debaters, surpassing even Chatham himself in ease, wit, skill, and versatility, though lacking that awe-inspiring faculty that swayed Parliament as with a Jove-like frown. The years 1780-82 saw him at the height of his powers. Grattan afterwards remarked that no one could realize the force of Fox's oratory who had not heard him before his unnatural coalition with Lord North in 1783, after which event he always seemed on the defensive: "the mouth still spoke great things, but the swell of soul was no more."[1] How great must have been his blunders and indiscretions, both in public and private life, to have blighted a career of so transcendent a promise.

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[1] Selwyn, p. 140.

The figure of Edmund Burke belongs rather to the sphere of literature and political philosophy than to that of political action. Great in thought and great in his powers of oratory, he yet failed to impress the House of Commons, or the public at large; his speeches were too ornate, too overburdened with learning and reasoning, to please an audience that is plain, practical, and apt to be impressed more by the speaker himself than by the fullness of his arguments or the beauty of his style. In a word, Burke lacked the indefinable gift which Chatham, Fox, and Mirabeau so abundantly possessed—that of personality. His figure had not the forceful massiveness of that of Fox, and it wanted the dignity of the younger Pitt. Moreover his voice was harsh, and his action clumsy. His philosophic love of wedding facts to principles often led him to soar to heights where the question at issue appeared like a speck and votes a vulgar impertinence. Worst fault of all, his speeches were far too long. The fullness and richness which delights us to-day then had the effect of emptying the House. The result of it all was the decline of his influence and the increase of his irritability, Celtic vivacity leading him more than once shrilly to chide friends who sought to pull him back to his seat. These failings, together with the number of his impecunious relatives, probably explain why he never attained to Cabinet rank. In a subordinate office in the year 1783 he showed signal want of tact and discernment. Thus, in contrasting the effect produced by the perusal of his great orations with that which gained him the nickname of the dinner-bell of the House, one is reminded of the truth of the bitter line levelled at him by Goldsmith:

> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.

The other group, which rivalled the official Whigs in the zeal of its opposition to Lord North, was that of the former followers of Chatham. They had neither organization nor a programme; but in general they inherited the imperial sentiments and non-partisan traditions of that great leader. They were less eager than the Rockingham group for parliamentary reform and the limiting of the royal prerogative; but, like the Girondins of the French Revolution, the indefiniteness of their aims left much liberty of action to their following; and Pitt, who naturally attached himself to this group, rivalled Fox in his zeal for Reform, both economic and parliamentary.

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[1] "Reminiscences of Charles Butler," i, 172.

The leader of the Chathamites was the Earl of Shelburne, who had been driven into opposition by the arbitrary conduct of the King at the time of the Wilkes affair. The estimates of his character are very diverse. Burke wrote of him privately in 1783 as "this wicked man, and no less weak and stupid than false and hypocritical," his chief crime being that of breaking in pieces the Whig party. Few persons would have gone so far as the vehement Irishman, who, on these lower levels, allowed party passion to dull his eagle glance. Shelburne was one of the *grands seigneurs* and political thinkers of the time. Polite and courtly, he dazzled men by the splendour of his hospitality. In his library he shone as a scholar and philosopher, and his conversation was the index of his keen and supple intellect. In public life he showed that he never lacked courage. Yet there was always something wanting about Shelburne. His speech and manner passed so quickly and easily from the affable to the severe as to beget feelings of distrust. His enemies accused him of duplicity and dubbed him Malagrida, a well-known Portuguese Jesuit.[1]

We may note here that Pitt either shared or deferred to the general feeling about Shelburne when he omitted him from his Cabinet in December 1783.

Some of the specific charges against Shelburne (and most of them are vague) have vanished now that the mists of passion, amidst which he ever moved, have cleared away.[2] It is the lot of some men to arouse undeserved dislike or distrust, owing to unfortunate mannerisms. Yet it is certain that England owes much to the earl. He was one of the first to espouse the Free Trade principles of Adam Smith; he was chiefly responsible for the terms of peace of 1782-3; and the admiration of Benjamin Franklin for him largely conduced to the signature of the preliminaries with the United States. Posterity has therefore accorded to him a far higher place than was allowed by the jealousy or pettiness of his contemporaries. Such was the leader to whom Pitt attached himself.

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[1] Wraxall, "Memoirs," ii, 62; G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 28.

[2] Lecky, "Hist. of England in the XVIIIth Cent.," iv, 228-34, does not absolve Shelburne of the charge of duplicity in the matter of the negotiations for peace; but Sir G. C. Lewis, "Administrations of Great Britain," 31-48, minimizes the importance of the point at issue.

On 25th January 1781 Shelburne protested manfully against the overbearing conduct of our Government in ordering the capture of Dutch merchantmen before the outbreak of war, and inveighed against the policy of the Ministry as fatal to liberty and to the welfare of the Empire. Finally he declared that the tactics of Government had proved that the conquest of the American colonies, if it could be accomplished, would entail fatal results at home; that he would be better pleased to see his country free, though curtailed in power and wealth, than acquiring greatness, if greatness were to be purchased at the expense of her constitution and liberty. The speech rang true to the traditions of Chatham; and it awoke responsive echoes in the breast of his son.[1]

Within the space of five weeks Pitt proved that his support was of the highest value. In a maiden speech, which perhaps bears away the palm from the first efforts of the greatest orators of all time, he gave proof of those astonishing powers which nature seemed to have implanted in a state of maturity. Practice and experience were to perfect them; but they then left on all his hearers an impression of wonder as at something almost supernatural in a youth of twenty-one years. This feeling was all the more natural as the speech dealt with economic subjects, which Wilberforce regarded as "of a low and vulgarizing quality."[2]

We must pause here to notice that the topic of economy was at that time of burning interest. On the whole it excited more general attention than the subject of parliamentary reform. In fact the latter was insisted on by practical men mainly with the view of stopping the frightful waste that resulted from sinecures, jobs, and other forms of corruption in the public service. Rigid doctrinaires like Major Cartwright might dilate on the heaven-born right of every man to have a vote, or depict the beauty of an electoral system which enlisted the virtuous energies of every citizen and called on him to renew Parliament every year, that being the natural time of renewal of all things.[1] A still stiffer theorist, Jebb, might go further and insist on the election of a new Parliament for each session. Together they might call for the ballot, equal electoral areas, and payment of members. Yet their arguments would have fallen on deaf ears but for the strain of war taxes, the dullness of trade, and the blunderings of placemen high in office. When London, Bristol, and Yorkshire felt the pinch of hard times, national expenditure became a matter of the most urgent concern.

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[1] Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne," iii, 118-21.

[2] "Private Papers of W. Wilberforce," 79.

It was in support of Burke's proposals for the better regulation of the King's Civil List and for abolishing several sinecures that Pitt made his maiden speech in the House (26th February 1781). At once he lifted the subject to a high level. The measure, he said, would have come with more grace, and with more benefit to the public service, had it sprung from the royal breast. Ministers ought themselves to have proposed it, thereby showing that His Majesty desired to participate in the suffering of the Empire.

> They ought to consult the glory of their royal master, and seat him in the hearts of his people, by abating from magnificence what is due to necessity. . . . The abridgment of useless and unnecessary expense can be no abatement of royalty. Magnificence and grandeur are not inconsistent with retrenchment and economy, but, on the contrary, in a time of necessity and of common exertion, solid grandeur is dependent on the reduction of expense; and it is the general sentiment and observation of the House that economy is at this hour essentially necessary to national salvation.

He next ventured on an argument scarcely consistent with the assumption of the royal graciousness and generosity touched on in his first period by asserting that the most important object of the bill was

> The reduction of the influence of the Crown—that influence which the last Parliament, by an express resolution, had declared to be increasing, and that it ought to be diminished—an influence which was more to be dreaded, because more secret in its attacks, and more concealed in its operations than the power of prerogative.

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[1] Cartwright, "Take your Choice" (1776). In 1780 Cartwright founded "The Society for promoting Constitutional Information," the first of the modern clubs that was purely political.

After referring briefly to this delicate subject, he held up to scorn those who ridiculed the proposal on the ground that it would effect a saving of only £200,000 a year; as if the calamities of the present crisis were too great to be benefited by economy: as if, when millions were being spent, there was no need to think of thousands! Finally he declared that the Civil List had been granted by Parliament to His Majesty, not for his personal gratification, but in order

> to support the power and the interests of the Empire, to maintain its grandeur, and pay the judges and the foreign ministers, and to maintain justice. . . . The people, who granted that revenue, under the circumstances of the occasion, were justified in resuming a part of it under the pressing demand of an altered situation. They clearly felt their right; but they exercised it with pain and regret. They approached the throne with hearts afflicted at the necessity of applying for retrenchment of the royal gratifications; but the request was at once loyal and submissive. It was justified by policy, and His Majesty's compliance with the request was inculcated by prudence as well as by affection.[1]

Admiration of the perfect manner in which the speech was delivered seems to have blinded contemporaries to its importance as a political pronouncement. Certainly in both respects it is remarkable. No speech ever won more general and more immediate praise. Burke declared the young orator to be not merely a chip of the old block but the old block itself. Charles James Fox hurried up to offer his congratulations on this oratorical triumph, and further showed his regard by proposing Pitt as a member of Brooks's club—a connection which he maintained unbroken through life. Lord North described the oration as the best first speech that he had ever heard; and another member of the House, Storer, commenting on the self-possession of the young speaker, which was far removed from "improper assurance," remarked that there was not a word or a look that one would have wished to correct.[2] In an age when dignity of diction and grace of deportment were deemed essential to the success of a speech—that was the time when Windham used to spend hours beforehand in framing elegant *juncturae* for his periods—the verdicts quoted above imply in a young speaker the possession of a profusion of gifts and graces no less remarkable than the maturity of judgment which harmonized them.

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[1] "The Speeches of William Pitt" (4 vols., 1806), i, 1-7.

[2] "George Selwyn: his Letters and his Life," p. 132 (Storer to Lord Carlisle, Feb. 28, 1781). He adds that Woodfall reportedt he debates "almost always faithfully." I therefore see no reason for refraining, as Earl Stanhope did, from citing many passages of his speeches, on the ground that they were very imperfectly reported.

Alas, the reader of to-day cannot fully realize the witchery of his diction, instinct with the fervour of youth, but balanced by the sagacity of manhood. The printed word can never reveal the nature of the spell cast on listeners by a noble countenance, harmonious gestures, musical cadences, and the free outpouring of inspiring thoughts. No great speeches, except those of a pre-eminently literary quality, such as shines in the stately rhetoric of Burke, can be appreciated apart from the speakers. It is the man who gives life to the words. A fervent admirer of Chatham's oratory summed up his chief impression in the suggestive remark that there was something in the speaker finer than his words; "that the man was infinitely greater than the orator." This must be so, if the speaker is to keep attention on tip-toe, ever on the look-out for new effects and charms. Hope is a necessary element in all admiration. The hearer, to be enthralled, must have been wafted up to that state of ecstasy wherein delight at present beauties is intensified by the expectation of other charms yet to come. Shakespeare has once for all time portrayed this mental bliss in the young and eager love of Florizel for Perdita:

> What you do
> Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
> I'ld have you do it ever.

Some such wealth of gifts the Commons of Britain discerned in Pitt in that springtide of hope. Theirs was to be a rich harvest of joy. Ours is but a lean aftermath.

The reader, who naturally thinks more about the matter of this speech than the manner of its delivery, will be most impressed by the boldness of some of the arguments. That a new member should venture to remind Parliament and the nation of the King's control over the Civil List being that of a steward, not of a proprietor, was daring enough; but it is startling to find the future champion of the Crown asserting that the nation could *resume* at least a part of what it had granted. There is no essential difference between this plea and the dictum of Rousseau (used so effectively by the French Revolutionists against the

King and the Church) that the hypothetical contract once framed between prince and people empowered the latter at any time to enter into possession of property which was held merely in trust on their behalf. The sentiments expressed in Pitt's first speech enable us to gauge the astonishment of the world when the young orator at the close of 1783 became first Minister of the Crown.

His second speech, delivered on 31st May, was perhaps less effective than the first, though it marks an advance in argumentative power and the handling of details. Colonel Barré had proposed that the commissioners who supervised the public accounts should be chosen from the House of Commons. After a hostile speech from Lord North, Pitt rose to support the motion. He pointed out how essential this proposal was for the maintenance of the power of the Commons. He continued thus:

> Every branch of the legislature has something peculiar to distinguish and to characterize it; and that which at once gives the character and elevation of the Commons House of Parliament is that they hold the strings of the national purse, and are entrusted with the great important power, first of granting the money, and then of correcting the expenditure. To delegate this right, then, is a violation of what gives them their chief consequence in the legislature, and what, above all other privileges, they cannot surrender or delegate without a violent breach of the constitution.

Tracking the Prime Minister into detail after detail, he finally begged the House to pass the motion as necessary for the prosperity of the land and as a pledge of further reforms.

> But (said he) if the motion is rejected, and the old and vicious system of government is in every point tenaciously adhered to, the freedom of the people and the independence of this House must be buried in the same grave with the power, the opulence and the glory of the Empire.

Men so diverse in character as George Selwyn and the young reformer, Wilberforce, were loud in praise of the speech. The latter, though he regretfully voted against Pitt, declared him to be "a ready-made orator"; while the old place-hunter and *roué* found in it, "*du sel et du piquant à pleines mains. Charles* [Fox] *en fut enchanté*."[1] Horace Walpole praised the speech in these terms:

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 143.

> The young William Pitt has again displayed paternal oratory. The other day, on the commission of accounts, he answered Lord North, and tore him limb from limb. If Charles Fox could feel, one should think such a rival, with an unspotted character, would rouse him. What if a Pitt and Fox should again be rivals. . . . As young Pitt is modest too, one would hope some genuine English may revive.

So far as we know, not a single vote was gained by this oration, for the division list showed ninety-eight against Barré's motion and only forty-two for it. A Scottish member, Ferguson of Pitfour, a faithful supporter of Henry Dundas, on one occasion confessed that he had only once ventured to vote on his own conviction, and that was the worst vote he ever gave. Many members, while lacking the courage and wit to make the admission, acted with equal fidelity to their own interests; and hence even the best speeches rarely won over votes. In the present case no one answered, and no one could answer, Pitt's arguments; yet they had no effect on the docile flock which trooped into the lobby at the heels of Lord North. By a majority of forty-three the Commons decided that the King should not be requested to show his benevolence and disinterestedness.

The third effort of the young orator had no more effect. It came about, apparently without premeditation, in the course of a debate on the motion of Fox for the conclusion of an immediate peace with our American colonies (12th June). In the first part of his speech Pitt warmly controverted two members who claimed that Chatham had sympathized with the war; and, in his eagerness to clear his father's memory, he averred that his (Chatham's) conduct on this subject had been uniform and consistent. After this doubtful assertion he stated his own views in a most trenchant style. Falling upon Lord Westcote, who had declared the war to be a holy war, he uttered these remarkable words:

> I am persuaded, and will affirm, that it is a most accursed, wicked, barbarous, cruel, unnatural, unjust, and diabolical war. It was conceived in injustice; it was nurtured and brought forth in folly;[1] its footsteps are marked with blood, slaughter, persecution and devastation; in truth everything which goes to constitute moral depravity and human turpitude are to be found in it. It is pregnant with misery of every

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[1] These images are curiously like those used by Lord Shelburne on 25th January 1781. See Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne," iii, 120.

kind. The mischiefs, however, recoil on the unhappy people of this country, who are made the instruments by which the wicked purposes of its authors are effected.

He continued in the same vehement strain, and seems to have impressed the House less than before, Selwyn giving as his verdict that he was "a promising young man." The speech does, indeed, sound somewhat forced; and its declamation seems too turgid to be effective. On this occasion "the King's cause" once more triumphed, by 172 votes to 99.

In the middle of July, after the close of the session, Pitt went on the western circuit, but the notices of his speeches are very meagre. The only reference that I have found to this episode in his life is in a letter of 29th August 1781 to his Cambridge friend, Meeke:

> I have this circuit amassed the immense sum of thirty guineas without the least expense either of sense or knowledge. . . . I shall return to town with the fullest intention of devoting myself to Westminster Hall and getting as much money as I can, notwithstanding such avocations as the House of Commons, and (which is a much more dangerous one) Goostree's itself. Adieu.

As a proof that Pitt did not merely play with the legal profession, I may quote this sentence from his letter of June 1782 to Meeke:

> I have for many reasons chosen to be only a friend, without being a member, of Shelburne's Administration, and am at least as likely to continue a lawyer as you are to commence one.[1]

The second letter belongs to a time when the prospects of advancement were unpromising, and when, therefore, Pitt devoted much of his time to the select and charming club at Goostree's. As there is a widespread impression that he was a political automaton, who never unbent save under the spell of Bacchus, it will be well to turn our attention to his social life in London and at Wimbledon. It cannot be said that he ever felt the full charm of London—

> The quick forge and working-house of thought.

Brought up in the aristocratic seclusion of Hayes and Burton

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[1] Both letters are among the Chevening MSS.

Pynsent, and in Pretyman's prim coterie at Cambridge, he had no experience of the varied jostling life which the Londoner loves: and nature had not dowered him with the adaptability that makes up for the defects of training. Therefore he ever remained somewhat of a stranger in London. He was at home in Downing Street, and still more so in his own select club, or at Hayes, Wimbledon, or Holwood; but London never laid her spell on him, and his life was the poorer for it. He reminds us somewhat of that character in Dickens's "Great Expectations," who, though naive and jovial, when he entered his suburban retreat in Walworth Road and the mimic castle at the end of the garden, yet always fixed his features in chilling reserve when he went forth citywards. So, too, there were two Pitts, the austere man of affairs, and the lovable, delightful friend. London alone could have mixed up the two men and produced a sociable compound; but this was not to be.

Lincoln's Inn and the law did little towards unbending him; though the story, recounted in the previous chapter, of his intellectual duel with Gibbon at a dinner in Lincoln's Inn during the Gordon Riots shows that even then he had the power of keen and witty repartee which gained him the victory over an admitted autocrat of the table. Why these gifts did not draw him into general society is hard to say. Probably his shyness and awkwardness, on which Wilberforce lays so much stress, held him aloof.

Certainly the temptations of the West End had for him only a passing allurement. He felt no desire, besides having no means, to associate with the gambling *cohue* that played at Brooks's or Almack's. His preference for bright and entertaining talkers naturally linked him with those who had sufficient mental resources within themselves to scorn the usually dull cliques whose interest in life begins and ends with card tables. So far as opportunities had offered at Cambridge, he had cultivated conversation as a fine art; and now in the West End he found several of his University friends who welcomed him to a somewhat wider circle. It included about twenty-five young men, of whom the most noteworthy were Lords Althorpe, Apsley, G. Cavendish, Duncannon, Euston, Graham, and Lennox; as well as the following who were to become peers: Mr. Pratt (Marquis Camden), St. John (Lord St. John), Bridgeman (Lord Bradford), Morris Robinson (Lord Rokeby), W. Grenville (Lord

Grenville), Pepper Arden (Lord Alvanley), and R. Smith (Lord Carrington).

That was the age when the bestowal of titles was one of the means of influence used by the Crown for the defence of its prerogatives. Wilberforce late in life remarked that more than half of the Peers had received their titles during his lifetime, and certainly, if we look at the circle of Pitt's friends in 1781, we find that only he and seven others remained commoners. They were Bankes, Edwards (afterwards Sir Gerard Noel), Marsham, T. Steele, General Smith, Wilberforce and Windham, a friend of somewhat later date.

These and a few others, about thirty in all, formed what might be termed Pitt's Club. They met first at a house in Pall Mall, but afterwards occupied rooms in the premises of a man named Goostree, which later on were used as the Shakespeare Gallery.[1] Opposition to Lord North's Ministry was one of the shibboleths of this coterie; but in pre-revolutionary days, when the merely political club was almost unknown, conviviality held the first place at Goostree's. One who was in George Selwyn's set evidently thought the ideals aimed at in Pitt's little society too good for London; for he wrote, at the close of 1781: "Goostree's is a small society of young men in Opposition, and they are very nice in their admissions; as they discourage gaming as much as possible, their club will not do any harm to Brooks's, and probably not subsist a great while." In February 1782 Selwyn himself refers to Pitt as having formed a "society of young ministers who are to fight under his banner . . . and they assemble at Goostree's." Clearly, then, this club was political, at least in part. Pitt spent much of his time there, supping at the club every night during the winter of 1780-81; and there it was that he became intimate with William Wilberforce, the most fascinating of his friends.

The young and brilliant member for Hull was a living proof of the triumph which mind can win over physical disadvantages. In person he was slight and bent, and he early suffered from that weakness of the eyes which hampered him through life. Yet, "bodkin" though he was, his quickness of mind, the silvery tones of his voice, the wit that sparkled in his speech, and his uniform geniality and kindliness gained for him a continuous round of social triumphs. His singing possessed a natural charm which drew from the Prince of Wales the statement that he would come at any time to hear Wilberforce sing. Equally attractive was his power of mimicking any public character; but what most of all endeared him to his friends was the genial raillery of his conversation, his power of lively repartee, and the chivalry which shone in all his words and deeds. Mme de Staël afterwards declared him to be the best talker among all the Englishmen she had known; and in that art of the *salons* the exuberant Genevese was an exacting connoisseur. She, however, could not know the warmth of feeling which animated that slight frame, or the sensitiveness of conscience which was to make him one of the chief uplifting forces of the age. Towards the close of his life he expressed regret that in his youth he had made intellectual conversation his all in all.[1] But regret was surely needless, when that gift attracted to him the young statesman whose life at some points he helped to inspire and elevate. Both of them, indeed, were artists in words; and the free play of mind on mind must have helped to strengthen those oratorical powers which were to be devoted to the service of their country and of mankind.

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 17.

From the pages of Wilberforce's diary we catch a glimpse, tantalizingly brief, alas, of Pitt as a boon companion, losing among his intimates that shyness which outsiders mistook for pride.

> He was the wittiest man I ever knew, and what was quite peculiar to himself, had at all times his wit under entire control. Others appeared struck by the unwonted association of brilliant images; but every possible combination of ideas seemed always present to his mind, and he could at once produce whatever he desired. I was one of those who met to spend an evening in memory of Shakespeare at the Boar's Head, East Cheap. Many professed wits were present, but Pitt was the most amusing of the party, and the readiest and most apt in the required allusions. He entered with the same energy into all our different amusements; we played a good deal at Goostree's, and I well remember the intense earnestness that he displayed when joining in these games of chance. He perceived their increasing fascination, and soon after suddenly abandoned them for ever.

This passage, together with its context, is interesting in more ways than one. Firstly it shows that the fashionable vice of the age had crept into Goostree's more than was known by outsiders; or else Selwyn's reference to the club belonged to a later period, when Pitt's resolve to have done with gambling, and the remorse of Wilberforce at having suddenly won a large sum from impecunious friends, had availed to curb the passion for it in their society. The difference of the two friends in temperament is equally noteworthy. In Wilberforce the resolve to break away from gambling was the first sign of awakening of a sensitive conscience, which, though dulled by gaieties, was thenceforth to assert itself more and more and finally to win over the whole of his energies.

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[1] *Ibid.*, v, 292.

Pitt also felt the fascination of play in a manner which shows the eagerness of his animal instincts; but the awakening in his case seems to have been due to self-respect and also to a keen sense of what he owed to the State. How could he, who had early vowed himself to the service of his country, dull his powers and tarnish his name by indulgence in an insidious and enslaving vice? The career of Charles James Fox, we may believe, had already been a warning to the young aspirant. In any case, by an exercise of that imperious will, which controlled even his vehement impulses, he crushed at once and for ever those entangling desires, and came forth fancy-free from that Circean domain, saved by his ennobling resolve to serve England.

In another sense—a less important one, it is true—Pitt was the most unfortunate man of his age. All his friends agreed that he was a delightful talker and the most charming of companions. But there their information ends. Not one of them had the Boswellian love of detail which enables us to peer right into the heart of Johnson, and discern the loves and hates, the prejudices and envyings, the whims and fancies which swayed it. A man can never be known unless we have, not merely his great speeches, but also his small talk. That of Pitt must have been of singular charm, not only from the richness of his mental gifts, but also from the width of the culture which informed them. In learning he equalled the best of his compeers at Cambridge; and we may imagine that his vivid knowledge of the life of Greece and Rome lent to his comparisons and references a grace which could be appreciated by few *raconteurs* of to-day. I have already referred to the stories circulated by those who set themselves to talk and write him down to their own level, that he studied the classics merely in order to provide elegant tags to his speeches. The theme has been embroidered by certain admirers of Fox, who picture the Whig statesman as the disinterested lover of Greece and Rome, and Pitt as a kind of money-grubbing paramour. If these persons, instead of copying from the many malicious stories of that time, would investigate for themselves, they would see through the partisan spitefulness of all such tales. Fortunately, Pitt's copies of the classics preserved at Orwell Park reveal signs, not only of his frequent perusal of them, but of the pleasure which it brought, as evinced by marginal comments. Away, then, with the Foxite myth of the classical tags!

The passage from Wilberforce's Diary cited above also shows Pitt to have been well primed with Shakespearean lore, and to have had the mental agility and tact which could cull the right flower from that rich garner. Ill though we could spare any of Pitt's oratorical efforts, I doubt whether we would not give up any one of his speeches if we could have in return a full record of some of the evenings spent by him and his friends at Goostree's or the Boar's Head.

Concerning his ordinary talk we only know that he delighted his family by his gaiety, even amidst the heaviest cares of state. In that terrible year 1793, when England and France had closed in the death grapple, Lady Chatham refers to his "ease and gay spirits"; and she speaks of him as not looking like a man on whom rested the destinies of kingdoms. A further sentence explains the source of this buoyancy of spirits: "The uprightness of his intentions and the strength of his mind saved him from feeling any oppression from the weight upon him."[1]

Here we see the secret of that cheerfulness which charmed his friends. His high spirits were in part, no doubt, bequeathed to him by the ever confident Chatham; but their even flow was also the outcome of his own conscious rectitude. Hence also there came the brightness and sincerity which shone in Pitt's conversation as also in his life. Another characteristic on which Wilberforce insisted was his strict truthfulness, which his friend attributed to his self-respect and to the moral purity of his nature. Yet there was no taint of priggishness about it. Wilberforce describes him as "remarkably cheerful and pleasant, full of wit and playfulness, neither, like Mr. Fox, fond of arguing a question, nor yet holding forth like some others [Windham is here hinted at]. He was always ready to hear others as well as to talk himself."[1]

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[1] Ashbourne, p. 159

Obviously, then, Pitt's conversation was free from some of the defects which mar the efforts of professional talkers. He never used the sledge-hammer methods by which Dr. Johnson too often won an unfair advantage; he scorned to make use of feigned incidents or grossly exaggerated accounts whereby many small wits gain a passing repute. His speech, in private as in public, seems to have resembled a limpid stream, the natural overflow of a mind richly stocked and a nature at once lively and affectionate.

Sometimes the stream raced and danced along, as appears from an entry in the diary of George Selwyn, in March 1782:

> When I left the House, I left in one room a party of young men, who made me, from their life and spirits, wish for one night to be twenty. There was a tablefull of them drinking—young Pitt, Lord Euston, Berkley, North, etc., singing and laughing *à gorge déployée*: some of them sang very good catches; one Wilberforce, a M. of P., sang the best.

This is only one of many signs that nature had bestowed on Pitt social gifts and graces which under more favourable conditions would have made him the centre of a devoted circle of friends. True, he was too shy and modest to figure as a political Dr. Johnson; too natural to pose as did the literary lion of Strawberry Hill; too prudent to vie with Fox as the chief wit and gamester of a great club. But in his own way and in his own sphere he might have carried on those honourable traditions which have invested the life of St. Stephen's with literary and social charm, had not Chatham's premature forcing of his powers devitalized him before the start of a singularly early and exacting career. Here was the ill fortune of Pitt. Like all precocious natures he needed times of rest and recuperation before he reached his prime. He sought them in vain either at Hayes, Cambridge, or Westminster. As we shall see, the very unusual state of English politics down to 1789 would have made the accession of Fox, the unofficial representative of the Prince of Wales, a public misfortune; and soon afterwards there occurred in quick succession the disputes with Spain, Russia, and France, which, after two false alarms, ended in a tremendous war. In such a period how could a delicate man rise to the height of his faculties, either political or social? On both sides of his nature Pitt showed signs of the most brilliant promise; but the premature and incessant strain of public duty robbed him and his country of the full fruition.

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[1] "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 68.

CHAPTER V

THE PEACE WITH AMERICA

Since the accession of our most gracious sovereign to the throne, we have seen a system of government, which may well be called a reign of experiments.—JUNIUS, Letter to the Duke of Grafton, 8th July 1769.

James I was contemptible, but he did not lose an America. His eldest grandson sold us, his younger lost us—but we kept ourselves. Now we have run to meet the ruin—and it is coming.—HORACE WALPOLE, 27th November 1781.

IN the autumn of the year 1781 occurred a series of events which brought Pitt for a time into open opposition to the King. As we have seen, he had not hesitated to invite George III to enter the path of Economical Reform which was peculiarly odious to him. But now the divergence of their convictions seemed hopeless. For if Pitt inherited the firmness of the Pitts and Grenvilles, George III summed up in his person the pertinacity characteristic of the Guelfs and the Stuarts. The gift of firmness, the blending of which with foresight and intelligence produces the greatest of characters, was united in George III with narrowness of vision, absorption in the claims of self, and a pedantic clinging to the old and traditional. Coming of a tough stock, and being admittedly slow and backward, he needed an exceptionally good education in order to give him width of outlook and some acquaintance with the lessons of history. But unfortunately his training was of the most superficial character. Lord Waldegrave, his governor, found him at the age of fourteen "uncommonly full of prejudices, contracted in the nursery, and improved by bedchamber women and pages of the back stairs."[1] From these cramping influences he was never to shake himself free. The death of his father, Frederick, Prince of Wales, in 1751, left him under the influence of his mother, an ambitious and intriguing woman, who instilled into him the desire to govern as well as reign. That advice accorded with the leanings of his nature, which, though torpid, was yet masterful.

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[1] Lord Waldegrave's "Memoirs," p. 63.

As will appear in the sequel, George III possessed characteristics which made him a formidable opponent. His lack of mental endowments was partly made up by his insight into character, and still more by his determined will. If he was dull, he was dogged—a quality dear to the Britons of that age. His private virtues, his homely good sense, a bearing that was generally genial, and a courage which never quailed, made him in many ways a pattern king for a plain people in ordinary times.

Unhappily for him and his people, the times were extraordinary. Like his contemporary, Louis XVI of France, he needed an intellectual equipment wider than that which goes to make a model country squire. In a period remarkable beyond all others for the infiltration of new ideas, neither of these unfortunate monarchs had the least skill in reading the signs of the times. But, while the royal hunter of Versailles was so conscious of his defects as frequently to lean too much on advisers and therefore waver, his equally Boeotian brother of Windsor had an absolute belief in his prognostications (save sometimes on foreign affairs) and scorned to change his mind. This last peculiarity appears in a letter which he wrote to Pitt on 2nd March 1797. After chiding his Prime Minister for complying too much with the Opposition, he continues:

> My nature is quite different. I never assent till I am convinced what is proposed is right, and then I keep [*sic*]; then I never allow that to be destroyed by afterthoughts, which on all subjects tend to weaken, never to strengthen, the original proposal.[1]

This is doubtless sound advice, provided that the first decision emanates from a statesmanlike brain. How ruinous the results can be if that resolve be the outcome of a narrow, proud, and self-complacent understanding, the fortunes of the British Empire in the years 1774-83 may testify. Those who love to dwell on the "might-have-beens" of history, may imagine what would have happened if the mild and wavering King of France had ruled Great Britain, and if our pertinacious sovereign had been in the place of the hapless Bourbon whose vacillations marred everything in the memorable spring of 1789.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 103.

In certain matters George III showed great ability. If he was not a statesman, he was a skilled intriguer. Shelburne, himself no tyro in that art, rated the King's powers high, stating that "by the familiarity of his intercourse he obtained your confidence, procured from you your opinion of different public characters, and then availed himself of this knowledge to sow dissension."[1] Further, the skill and pertinacity with which he pulled the wires at elections is astonishing. No British monarch has equalled him in his knowledge of the means by which classes and individuals could be "got at." Some of his letters on these subjects, especially that on the need of making up for the "bad votes" cast for Fox in the famous Westminster Election of 1784, tempt one to think that George III missed his vocation, which should have been that of electioneering agent of the Tory party. In truth he almost succeeded in making Windsor and St. James's the headquarters of that faction.[2]

Despite his private virtues, he rarely attached men to him by the ties of affection and devotion—the mark of a narrow and selfish nature. His relations to his sons were of the coolest; and all his Ministers, except, perhaps, Addington, left him on terms that bordered on dislike if not hostility. The signs of the royal displeasure (as Junius justly observed to the Duke of Grafton) were generally in proportion to the abilities and integrity of the Minister. This singular conduct may be referred to the profound egotism of the King which led him to view politics solely from his own standpoint, to treat government as the art of manipulating men by means of titles, places, and money,[3] and to regard his Ministers as confidential clerks, trustworthy only when they distrusted one another. The union of the Machiavellian traits with signal virtue and piety in private life is a riddle that can be explained only by his narrow outlook, which regarded all means as justifiable for the "right cause," and believed all opponents to be wicked or contemptible. In fact, the narrowing lens of his vision alike stunted and distorted all opponents until they appeared an indistinguishable mass. A curious instance of facility in jumbling together even irreconcilable opposites appeared in his remark to Lord Malmesbury in 1793 that the *Illuminés* (the Jacobins of Germany) "were a sect invented by the Jesuits to overthrow all governments and all order."[1] Such was the mental equipment of the monarch on whom now rested the fate of the Empire.

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[1] Nicholl, "Recollections of George III," i, 389.

[2] Porritt, i, 409-15.

[3] See May's "Const. History," i, 315 *et seq.* for the increase of the Secret Service Fund under George III.

On Sunday, 25th November 1781, news arrived in London which sealed the doom of Lord North's Ministry. Cornwallis, with rather less than seven thousand men, had surrendered to the Franco-American forces at Yorktown. The blow was not heavy enough to daunt a really united kingdom. On the Britain of that year, weary of the struggle, and doubtful alike of its justice and its utility, the effect was decisive. Lord North, on hearing the news from his colleague, Lord George Germain, received it "as he would have taken a bullet through his breast." He threw up his arms and paced up and down the room, exclaimed wildly: "Oh, God! it is all over." This, if we may believe Wraxall,[2] was the ejaculation of the man who latterly had been the unwilling tool of his sovereign in the coercion of the American colonists.

While Lord North, the Parliament, and the nation were desirous of ending the war, the King still held to his oft expressed opinion, that it would be total ruin for Great Britain to give way in the struggle, seeing that a great Power which begins to "moulder" must be annihilated.[3] He therefore kept North to his post, and allowed the King's speech for the forthcoming autumn session to be only slightly altered; the crucial sentence ran as follows:

> No endeavours have been wanting on my part to extinguish that spirit of rebellion which our enemies have found means to foment and maintain in the colonies, & to restore to my deluded subjects in America that happy and prosperous condition which they formerly derived from a due obedience to the laws; but the late misfortune in that quarter calls loudly for your firm concurrence and assistance to frustrate the designs of our enemies, equally prejudicial to the real interests of America and to those of Great Britain.

The gauntlet thus defiantly flung down was taken up with spirit by Fox and Burke, who even ventured to threaten with impeachment the Secretary for the Colonies, Germain, and the

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[1] Malmesbury Diaries, iii, 8.

[2] Wraxall, ii, 434-5 (3rd edit.)

[3] "Letters of George III to Lord North," ii, 336.

First Lord of the Admiralty, the Earl of Sandwich. This was unfair. They were little more than puppets moved by the King; and he was responsible ultimately for the bad condition of the army and navy, and was sole cause for the continuance of the war. No one imagined (so Romilly wrote on 4th December 1781) that the war would go on after the disaster at Yorktown.[1]

In the ensuing debates on the King's speech, Pitt made an effective attack on Ministers, upbraiding them with the inconsistency of their statements and the obscurity in which they shrouded their plans. For himself, with his profound conviction as to the need of promptly terminating the war, he adjured them to state clearly what line of conduct they meant to pursue. This last challenge went home because the language of Ministers was openly inconsistent, that of the Lord Advocate, Dundas, being hardly different from the views held by the Opposition. In fact it was now said that there were three parties on the Government benches—the King's, Lord North's, and that of Dundas, shading off from war *à outrance* to something like conciliation with America.

Nevertheless, the House (as Fox wrote in his Journal) was "tenacious of places and pensions," and at first supported the Government by substantial majorities; but a typical placeman like Selwyn wrote early in December that if the measures and conduct of the Ministry were not changed, they were completely undone. Nervousness about his sinecure made the wit a true prophet. Not only was the majority breaking into groups, but the Opposition was acting well together. This again was a result of the Yorktown disaster. Only a few days previously, Shelburne, the leader of the Chathamites, had in vain proposed to the official chief of the Whigs, Rockingham, that they should unite their followers, so that there should be but two parties, "that of the Crown and that of the people."

Now, however, as victory came in sight, the Opposition closed its ranks, while the once serried phalanx of placemen opposite began to split up from sheer panic. During this interesting time Pitt made another speech, which won high encomiums from Horace Walpole for its "amazing logical abilities." Equally notable was the alertness which fastened on a slight incident. In the midst of his tirade against the inconsistencies of Ministers,

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[1] "Life of Romilly," i, 135.

North and Germain began to whisper together, while that wary little placeman, Welbore Ellis, who was between them, bent down his head to listen. At once Pitt exclaimed: "I will wait until the unanimity is a little better restored. I will wait until the Nestor of the Treasury has reconciled the difference between the Agamemnon and the Achilles of the American War."[1]

Little by little Lord North's majority dwindled away. It sank to a single vote on 22nd February 1782, when General Conway brought forward a motion for the termination of the war. On the renewal of the motion five days later, the House, amidst a scene of great excitement, declared against North by 234 votes to 215. The Ministry, under pressure from the King, held on for a few days, and, on 8th March, even defeated a vote of censure by a majority of ten.

Pitt, who was one of the tellers for the minority, had startled the House, in the course of a fighting speech, by the following notable words: "For myself, I could not expect to form part of a new administration; but, were my doing so more within my reach, I would never accept a subordinate situation." On the authority of Admiral Keppel, his neighbour in the House, he is said to have repented immediately of this declaration, and to have wished to rise and explain or mitigate it. If so, the feeling must surely have been only momentary. Pitt, as we have seen, was essentially methodical. His feelings, his words, even his lightest jests, were always completely under control. It is therefore impossible to regard so important a statement as due to the whim of the moment, or to the exaggeration of which a nervous or unskilful speaker is often guilty. Still less can we believe that he seriously intended to explain away his words. So weak an action would have been wholly repugnant to another of his characteristics—pride. The declaration was probably the outcome of his unwavering self-confidence and of a belief that any Ministry which could be formed must be short lived.

If so, his conduct was well suited to bring him to the front at a time more opportune than the present. It was inconceivable that a monarch so masterful and skilled in intrigue as George III should long submit to be controlled by the now victorious Whig families, whose overthrow had been his chief aim. To foment the schisms in their ranks, and shelve them at the first possible time was an alternative far preferable to that of retiring to Hanover—a suggestion which he once more threw out to Lord North. When the struggle between Crown and Commons had come to its second phase, it would be time for a young member to take a leading place.

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[1] Stanhope, i, 67.

A crisis became imminent forthwith, on the House passing a declaration that it would "consider as enemies to His Majesty and to this country all who should advise or by any means attempt the further prosecution of offensive war on the continent of America." By this Act the Commons reasserted their undoubted right of controlling the prerogative of the Crown even in the question of peace or war.[1] The declaration was a preliminary to impeachment of Ministers in case they still persisted in defying the House.

It also led the King, on 11th March, to send his champion, the Chancellor, Lord Thurlow, to consult with Lord Rockingham. The leader of the official Whigs knew that he had the game in his hands, and sought to dictate the conditions on which alone he would form an administration. They were as follows: "American Independence; no Veto; Establishment Bill; great parts of Contractors Bill; Custom House and Excise, etc., Bill. Peace in general, if possible; Economy in every branch."[2] The King demurred to these terms, and after eight days the overture lapsed. Meanwhile Lord North's position in the House was becoming intolerable, and on 20th March he announced the resignation of his Ministry. On going to take leave of the King, he was greeted by the following characteristic words: "Remember, my Lord, that it is you who desert me, not I you."

Most sovereigns would now have accepted defeat. But George III was no less dogged of will than ingenious in finding a way of escape. He had one chance left. Beside the official Whig families, headed by Rockingham, there were the Chathamites, led by Shelburne, who occupied an intermediate position not easy to define. Like most political groups which profess to be above party, they had succeeded in forming another party. They differed from the Whigs in not desiring to see the royal prerogative shorn of power, as it had been under the first two Georges to the advantage of the old governing families. In foreign and colonial affairs they aimed at the triumph of a truly national policy, which, while furthering the cause of freedom, also made for the greatness of the Empire. Even amidst his protests against the continuance of the war, Shelburne raised his voice, as Chatham had done, against a complete severance of the tie uniting the colonies to the motherland.[1] These opinions seem to us now unpractical in view of the existing state of things. Certainly, if we may judge by the speeches of William Pitt, he had overshot the limits of the Chathamite traditions which his chief still observed.

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[1] May, "Const. History," i, 458.

[2] Rockingham, "Memoirs," ii, 452-3.

Nevertheless, the Chathamites, albeit a somewhat *doctrinaire* group, indeed scarcely a party, might now be utilized as a buffer between the throne and the Whig magnates. Accordingly, the King, during an interview with Shelburne, in which he expressed his dislike of Rockingham, proposed that Shelburne should form a Cabinet with Rockingham as head, Shelburne being the intermediary between the King and the Prime Minister. As Shelburne knew that he could not stand without the support of the Whigs, the latter had their way at nearly all points. The King most reluctantly consented not to veto American Independence —a matter on which Rockingham stood firm. In smaller and personal matters, on which George III set much store, he partly succeeded. He refused to see Rockingham until the latter was Prime Minister; he insisted on keeping his factotum, Lord Thurlow, as Chancellor, and he fought hard to keep the gentlemen of the royal household unchanged; but, as he wrote to Lord North, "the number I have saved is incredibly few." Among them was Lord Montagu, the governor of the King's son, whom Horace Walpole dubbed the King's spy on the Prince of Wales, and the only man in whom he (George III) had any confidence. The same sharp critic noted that the King now used, with some success, the only artifice in which he had ever succeeded, that of sowing discord. He had openly shown that Shelburne and Thurlow were his men in the Cabinet; and Fox, who became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said that the new Cabinet belonged partly to the King and partly to the people. In the very limited sense in which the Whigs were a popular party (for the official Whigs sought the support of the people mainly in order to browbeat the King), the remark was correct.

However that may be, the King had certainly contrived largely to nullify the victory of the Whigs by fomenting discords in the Cabinet. So astute an intriguer as Shelburne was certain to chafe at the ascendancy of Rockingham; and the King's tactics, while humiliating the Prime Minister, enabled Shelburne secretly to arrange matters according to the royal behests. Shelburne held the secretaryship for Home Affairs, which then carried with it a supervision of the executive at Dublin Castle. He also brought in Dunning (now created Lord Ashburton without the knowledge of Rockingham) as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; and it has been ascertained that he sought to include Pitt in the Cabinet with some high office. Which office he was to have is not clear; but Lady Chatham wrote to Shelburne on 28th March in terms which implied an office of Cabinet rank. Here, however, Rockingham protested with success; and as a result only the Vice-Treasurership of Ireland was offered him, an office which by his previous declaration he had bound himself to refuse.[1] His exclusion from the Cabinet by the influence of the official Whigs served to alienate him from that party, and brought him more in contact with men who were beginning to figure as supporters of the royal prerogative.

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[1] Speech of 7th February 1782 ("Parl. Hist.," xxii, p. 987).

As a private member, Pitt gave his support to the new Ministry; and on 29th April he made a brief but telling appeal for unanimity, "from which the salvation of the nation could alone be hoped for." Certainly the Ministry needed the help of all patriots. The prestige of Britain was at the lowest ebb. Beaten alike in the New World and in the Mediterranean, where Minorca had recently been recovered by the Spaniards, she seemed at the end of her resources. Ireland was in a state of veiled rebellion. The Parliament at Dublin unanimously demanded the repeal of Poynings Act and that of the year 1720, which assured its dependence on the British Government; and some 100,000 Volunteers were ready to take the field to make good the claim. In vain did the new Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Portland, seek to gain time. Grattan, whom the Earl of Mornington styled "the most upright and temperate demagogue that ever appeared in any country," had Ireland at his back. He refused to wait; and in the month of May the British Parliament gave effect to his demands by unanimously conceding legislative independence to the Dublin Parliament.[2] Pitt did not speak on the subject, but he probably agreed with the change, which in the circumstances was inevitable. The news aroused in Ireland a storm of enthusiasm, and the Dublin Parliament voted the sum of £100,000 for raising 20,000 seamen. For the present, then, the Irish question was shelved, but at the cost of many difficulties in the future.

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[1] Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne," iii, 136.

[2] "Dropmore P.," i, 163; Lecky, iv *ad fin.*

About the same time, the cloud which had hung so ominously over Britain's navy cleared away. News arrived of the victory which Rodney gained over the French fleet under Count de Grasse near Dominica on 12th April 1782,[1] which saved the West Indian colonies and restored Britain's supremacy on the ocean. Equally fortunate was Eliott's repulse of a determined attack on Gibraltar by the French and Spaniards, which brought about the relief of the garrison and ensured the total failure of the prolonged and desperate efforts of France and Spain to seize the key of the Mediterranean.

The spirit of the nation rose with these successes; and Shelburne brought forward a Bill for arming the people. The motion came to little, probably because of the fear which the Lord George Gordon riots had aroused;[2] but, as the sequel will show, it took effect in some quarters and provided the basis for the far more important Volunteer Movement of the Great French War.

It is remarkable, as showing the strong bent of Pitt's nature towards civil affairs, that he spoke, not on these topics, but solely on the cause of Parliamentary Reform. His insistence on this topic at a time of national peril can be paralleled by the action of another statesman a century later; and it is significant that, when Mr. Gladstone introduced his Franchise Bill in 1884, he was warmly reproached by Lord Randolph Churchill for bringing forward this topic amidst the conflicts or complications in which we were involved in Egypt, the Sudan, Afghanistan, and South Africa. But the Liberal leader claimed that by conferring the franchise on some two million of citizens, the people would be arrayed "in one solid compacted mass around the ancient throne which it has loved so well and round a constitution now to be more than ever powerful and more than ever free." The plea has been justified by events; and we can now gauge at its true value the politic daring of the two statesmen who sought to meet dangers from without by strengthening the fabric of the Empire at its base.

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[1] Hood, Rodney's second in command, asserted that if Rodney had fought and pursued vigorously he would have taken not five but twenty French ships of the line. See "Rodney's Letters and Despatches," ed. by D. Hannay for the Navy Records Society, p. 103

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 1.

In the year 1782 the gravity of the crisis was far greater than that of the year 1884; for the storms were beating on an edifice dangerously narrow at the ground. Realizing that the subject of the representation was too complicated to be handled except after an official investigation, Pitt for the present proposed merely the formation of a Committee of Inquiry which should report on the best means of carrying out "a moderate and substantial reform." His proposals, and still more the fame of his eloquence, aroused great interest; so that on the morning of 7th May a crowd endeavoured to gain access to Westminster Hall. Many of the "news-writers" were excluded, with results harmful to the printed reports of the speech.[1] Pitt prefaced his remarks by acknowledging most thankfully that they had now to do with a Ministry which desired such a measure, and not with one that "laboured to exert the corrupt influence of the Crown in support of an inadequate representation of the people." He assumed it as proven that the House of Commons had received an improper and dangerous bias, which impaired the constitution.

> That beautiful frame of government which has made us the envy and admiration of mankind, in which the people are entitled to hold so distinguished a share, is so far dwindled, and has so far departed from its original purity, as that the representatives have ceased, in a great degree, to be connected with the people. It is of the essence of the constitution that the people should have a share in the government by the means of representation; and its excellence and permanency is calculated to consist in this representation, having been designed to be equal, easy, practicable, and complete. When it ceases to be so; when the representative ceases to have connection with the constituent, and is either dependent on the Crown or the aristocracy, there is a defect in the frame of representation, and it is not innovation but recovery of constitution, to repair it.

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[1] "Life of Romilly," i, 162. Romilly, who was present, quotes a sentence of the speech, which did not appear in the official report: "This House is not the representative of the people of Great Britain; it is the representative of nominal boroughs, of ruined and exterminated towns, of noble families, of wealthy individuals, of foreign potentates."

He then pointed out some of the worst anomalies of the existing system. There were some boroughs wholly controlled, or absolutely possessed, by the Treasury. In others its influence was contested solely by a great landowner, but never by the inhabitants in their own right. Some few boroughs [Old Sarum is the classical instance] had only one or two voters. Other towns,

> in the lofty possession of English freedom, claim to themselves the right to bring their votes to market. They have no other market, no other property, and no other stake in the country, than the property and price which they procure for their votes. Such boroughs are the most dangerous of all. So far from consulting the interests of their country in the choice which they make, they hold out their borough to the best purchaser. . . . It is a fact pretty well known that the Nabob of Arcot had no less than seven or eight members in that House. May not a foreign State in enmity with this country, by means of these boroughs, procure a party of men to act for them under the mask and character of members of that House?

Pitt then warned the Commons that the forces of corruption might soon be found to be as strong as ever. Though they had grown with our growth, they had not decayed with our decay. For years they had maintained in power a Ministry which had worked ruin to the Empire. Finally, he referred to the opinion of his father on this great subject and besought members to satisfy the longings now widely expressed throughout the kingdom, which must carry the matter to a triumphant issue. His speech was loudly cheered. The able orations of Fox and Sheridan also seemed to carry the House with them; but, as in former cases, the undercurrent of self-interest worked potently against Reform, and ensured the rejection of Pitt's proposal by 161 votes to 141. The country gentlemen were alarmed at his motion, the opposition of Pitt's relative, Thomas Pitt, being especially strong.

Probably it was a tactical mistake for Pitt, a private member, to bring forward such a motion. If he had waited until the Ministry had so far prevailed over its external difficulties and internal dissensions as to be able to take up the question, his support might have ensured the triumph of the Government proposals. As it was, the misgivings of the cautious, the vested interests of nominee members, the embarrassments of the

Ministry, and the opposition of the old Whig families, doomed to failure his second effort in this direction. Not for the space of forty-eight years was so favourable an opportunity to recur; and then it was a new Industrial England which burst through the trammels of an old-world representation.

Undaunted by this rebuff, he spoke on 17th May in favour of the motion of a veteran reformer, Alderman Sawbridge, for shortening the duration of Parliaments. Only one of his arguments has come down to us, namely his contention that the Septennial Act placed undue influence in the hands of Ministers, as appeared from the strenuous opposition which the enemies of political purity had always offered to the repeal of that measure. Fox spoke for the motion; but Burke, who had been persuaded to absent himself from the earlier debate, now let loose the vials of his wrath against a Reform of Parliament in whatever shape it came. Sheridan describes him as attacking Pitt "in a scream of passion," with the assertion that Parliament was just what it ought to be, and that all change would be fatal to the welfare of the nation.

Burke's diatribe prepares us for the part which he played during the French Revolution. The man who discerned perfection in a Parliamentary system, in which Scotland had only 4,000 voters and 45 members, while 19 Cornish villages returned 38 members; in which the Duke of Norfolk could put in 11 members, and the Nabob of Arcot 7 or 8, while Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and Birmingham remained politically dumb—such a man might well regard the French revolutionists as "the ablest architects of ruin" that the world had ever seen. His tirade against short Parliaments carried the House with him, the motion being rejected by a majority of 88.

It is interesting to find Pitt taking part at a meeting of friends of Reform at the Thatched House Tavern (18th May 1782), which seems to have been held under the auspices of Major Cartwright's "Society for Promoting Constitutional Information." The Duke of Richmond, Lord Mahon, Sir Cecil Wray, and the Lord Mayor were present. A motion was passed urging the need of petitioning Parliament for "a substantial reformation of the Commons House of Parliament"; and the minutes of the meeting were in Pitt's handwriting. He was then in correspondence with John Frost, an attorney of Percy Street, who was secretary for the Middlesex Reform Committee; and in the second letter the young statesman refers to some honour which that committee proposed to confer on him for his efforts on their behalf. These facts and Pitt's letters to Frost were produced by Erskine during his defence of Frost against a charge of sedition early in the Hilary Term 1793.[1] The episode was highly effective and probably ensured the mitigation of Frost's sentence. The whole incident is noteworthy, as it points the contrast between the earlier and later phases of Pitt's career which was to be produced by the French Revolution.

Pitt did not speak during the debates on two other measures which alone of all the reformers' programme passed through Parliament in 1782. They were the Contractors Bill, which, by excluding all contractors from Parliament and disfranchising all revenue officers, dealt a blow at some forms of political corruption.[2] By the other Act several sinecures, with salaries of about £70,000 a year, were swept away. The King exerted his influence against both measures, his man, Lord Thurlow, striving by every means to defeat the former of them in the Lords; while the Economy Bill was shorn of some of its more drastic clauses by the action of Shelburne and Thurlow in Cabinet Councils.

The difficulty of common action was seen during the discussion of a Bill for the repression of bribery at elections (19th June). Pitt spoke in favour of the motion, but, strange to say, Fox opposed it. This was the first occasion on which they voted in opposite lobbies, though there had been no friendship or close intercourse between them. The motion was of course lost.

Their relations were destined quickly to alter, owing to an event which opened another phase of the long struggle between the King and the hostile Whig "phalanx." On 1st July 1782 the Marquis of Rockingham died. Of small ability, he yet held a conspicuous place in the affairs of State, owing to his vast landed estates, the strength of his political and family connections, and to his high character. At once the King and the "phalanx" girded themselves for the conflict. On the very next day George III offered the Premiership to the Earl of Shelburne, now more than ever inclining to the King's side. With an openness which did not always characterize him, that Minister at once referred the proposal to his colleagues, only to have it rejected by the official Whigs. Four of Rockingham's most decided friends in the Cabinet—Fox, the Duke of Richmond, Lord John Cavendish, and Admiral Keppel—demanded that the Duke of Portland should be Prime Minister.[1] Such a proposal was doubly objectionable; first, because the Duke, as then appeared from his conduct at Dublin Castle, had little insight and no strength of character; secondly, because the proposal itself was scarcely constitutional; for the King had, as he still has, the right to select his Prime Minister. Nevertheless, Shelburne consented to refer the proposal to George III, who emphatically rejected it. Thereupon Fox and Lord John Cavendish resigned; Shelburne undertook to form an Administration and offered the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, vacated by Lord John Cavendish, to William Pitt. He at once accepted it.

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[1] "Speeches of Lord Erskine" (edit. of 1880), p. 293; "The Papers of Christopher Wyvil," i, 424-5; State Trials, xxii, 492-4.

[2] See Mahon, "Hist. of England," vii, 17; Porritt, i, 217.

The other chief changes were that Thomas Townshend (soon to become Lord Sydney) took the Secretaryship of State held by Shelburne, while Fox was succeeded as Secretary for Foreign Affairs by Lord Grantham, and the Duke of Portland, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, by Earl Temple. Burke and Sheridan marked their attachment to the Whigs by resigning their subordinate offices. It was in face of able, eloquent, and exasperated men like these that Pitt took up the burden of office, along with the virtual leadership of the House of Commons, at the age of twenty-three.

The conduct of Fox and his friends in resigning office was hotly arraigned. A debate on their action in voting a pension of £3,200 a year to Colonel Barré turned mainly on the larger question (9th July). Fox, conscious that Barré's pension was a blot on Ministers who had posed as champions of economy, retorted fiercely on his critics, declaring Shelburne and his followers to be heedless alike "of promises which they had made, of engagements into which they had entered, of principles which they had maintained, of the system on which they had set out. . . . They would abandon fifty principles for the sake of power, and forget fifty promises when they were no longer requisite to their ends; . . . and he expected to see that, in a very short time, they would be joined by those men whom that House had precipitated from their seats."[2]

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[1] "Buckingham Papers," i, 50.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 163.

Had Fox been satisfied with defending his own resignation on the ground of disagreement with Shelburne on details of policy, his relations to the Chathamites might have remained cordial. But the attack on Pitt's chief was so violent as to provoke sharp rejoinders. General Conway defended Shelburne from the charge of apostasy, and stated that it was he who had convinced George III of the need of recognizing the independence of the American colonies; also that the differences between Shelburne and Fox on that point were merely differing shades of opinion.[1] Pitt expressed his regret at the resignation of Fox, but attributed it in the main to a dislike of Shelburne rather than of his policy. For himself, he said, he completely trusted the noble earl, and if he were called upon to serve under him (his appointment was not yet confirmed) he would do so cheerfully in any capacity and to the utmost of his power. The strictures of Fox were further discounted by the fact that Richmond and Keppel did not resign their seats in the Cabinet.

On reviewing the action of Fox after this lapse of time it seems impossible to acquit him of the charge of acting with haste and bad temper. His charges against the sincerity of Shelburne respecting the details of the negotiation then begun with France and America have been refuted, or at least minimized, by an eminent authority.[2] Fox must have known as well as Conway that Shelburne had induced George III to recognize the independence of the American colonies—a political service of the highest order; and if on matters of detail he sharply differed from him, and thought him insincere, meddlesome, and too friendly to the King, it was his duty to remain in office with his Whig friends so as to curb those tendencies. It is by no means certain (as Mr. Lecky asserted) that he would have been always, or generally, outvoted;[3] and his presence in the Cabinet would have strengthened his party in the Commons. It may be granted that he believed he was taking the only straightforward course; but his vehement nature often led him to unwise conclusions. True, his colleagues nearly always forgave him; for it was a signal proof of the warmth of his disposition that his friends loved him even when he offended them; but they came by degrees to distrust his judgement, and to see that other gifts than courage, eloquence, and personal charm were needed in a leader. Certain it is that public opinion condemned his resignation as hasty, ill-timed, and compromising to the cause of Reform.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 175; "Life of Romilly," i, 173. Fox had announced to the Cabinet his intention of resigning a few days before Rockingham's death. See the "Memorials of Fox," i, 435 *et seq.*

[2] Sir G. C. Lewis, "Administrations of Great Britain," pp. 31-48.

[3] Lecky, iv, 239. The original Cabinet numbered five Rockingham Whigs and five Shelburne Whigs

His action was especially unfortunate in this last respect. In April he had written that, if the Rockingham Cabinet could stay in office long enough to deal "a good stout blow to the influence of the Crown," it would not matter if the Ministry broke up. But the blow had not been dealt; the passing of the Economy Bill and the exclusion of contractors from Parliament and revenue officers from the franchise had only scotched the snake of corruption, not killed it. Yet the party which alone could deal the final blow was now weakened by the action of the most ardent of reformers. The worst result of all, perhaps, remains to be noticed. When Fox maliciously taunted Shelburne with being about to unite with Lord North in order to keep in office, no one could have imagined that the speaker would soon have recourse to that despicable manœuvre; but the curse, flung out in heedless wrath, was destined to come home to roost.

Pitt now came to office by a path which necessitated a sharp divergence from Fox—a divergence, be it noted, due to party tactics and not to the inner convictions of the men themselves. After the foregoing account of the session of 1782—it ended on 11th July—the reader will be in a position to judge for himself whether up to that time Pitt or Fox was to blame for a split which seems unnatural and blameworthy.

In the month of August Pitt moved into the "vast awkward house" in Downing Street which was to be his official residence. Dissensions soon arose in the Cabinet; and in addition there were the dangers resulting from the war and the urgent need of concluding peace. Accordingly Pitt was able to spend but very few days out of town at his beloved Hayes, even in the heat of summer, still less to go on circuit as he had intended. The Shelburne Ministry contrived to simplify the diplomatic situation by offering to recognize the independence of the United States (27th September). The frankness with which this was done, at a time when Vergennes, the French Foreign Minister, showed a keen desire to shut those growing communities out from the valley of the Mississippi,[1] served somewhat to allay the anti-British fury kindled by the War. The Americans saw, what had long been discerned at Westminster, that the Bourbons were using them as pawns in their game for the overthrow of the British Empire; and their envoys resolved to break loose from their engagement not to treat separately for a peace with England. The preliminaries of peace, signed on 30th November, accorded to the young Commonwealth the Mississippi as its boundary on the west, and the larger part of the great lakes on the north, together with fishery rights off Newfoundland. All these terms, including that of the independence of the States, were provisional, taking effect whenever peace should be settled with France and Spain.

The negotiations with France and Spain were rendered easier by the ill-will now existing between the Bourbon Powers and the United States. The relief of the garrison of Gibraltar by Lord Howe further disposed them to abate their terms. On the other hand, they knew of the difficulties of the British Cabinet, and the general desire of the nation for peace. Matters were therefore in a complicated state at the end of the year 1782; and we learn from a statement of Shelburne that during November he refrained from summoning Cabinet Councils in order to preserve unanimity.[2] Ministers had indeed differed sharply, firstly, on the question whether Gibraltar should be handed back to Spain, and secondly, on that of the indemnity. The King and Shelburne wished to have Porto Rico and West Florida in exchange for Gibraltar; Grafton preferred Porto Rico and Trinidad; while Richmond, Keppel (probably also Pitt) objected to the cession of the great fortress which had been so stoutly held against a three years' siege.[3]

Such was the state of affairs when, on 5th December, Parliament reassembled. On the next day Pitt committed a mistake which exposed him to a reprimand from the King through Shelburne. Fox pressed Ministers to declare that the acknowledgement of American independence was unconditional. The senior Minister in the House, Townshend, replied that that condition of peace would take effect only on the conclusion of a general peace. Pitt, however, added that "the clear indisputable meaning of the provisional agreements made with the American commissioners was the unqualified recognition of their independence"; and it would form part of the treaty with the belligerent powers.[1] Here he overshot the mark. That recognition depended on the conclusion of treaties with France and Spain. The King, therefore, sent him a rebuke through Shelburne, adding, however, "It is no wonder that so young a man should have made a slip."—We cannot regret the occurrence, for it shows how anxious Pitt was to have that great question settled.

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[1] Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne," vol. iii, chs. iv-vi.

[2] "Buckingham Papers," i, 76.

[3] Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne.' iii, 305 Stanhope, "Pitt," i, 86.

In the ensuing debates Pitt sharply retorted on Burke, who, quoting from "Hudibras," had accused Ministers of making the King speak—

> As if hypocrisy and nonsense
> Had got the advowson of his conscience.

The son of Chatham showed something of his father's fire, reprobating the unseemly jeer of the speaker and declaring that he repelled the further charge of hypocrisy "with scorn and contempt." A retort courteous, or humorous, would have been more in place after Burke's raillery; but Pitt, though witty in private, rarely used this gift in the House, probably because he wished to be taken seriously. In this he succeeded. In all but name he was leader of the House of Commons. The task of keeping together a majority was extremely difficult; for, according to Gibbon, the Ministry could command only 140 votes, while as many as 120 voted with Lord North, 90 with Fox, the rest drifted about as marketable flotsam. The situation became worse still late in the year, when rumours began to fly about that Fox and Lord North were about to join their discordant forces for the overthrow of the Ministry.

In these circumstances the Shelburne Cabinet rendered the greatest possible service by holding on to office, while they pressed through the negotiations with France, Spain, and Holland. Ultimately, the preliminaries of peace were signed on 20th January 1783. They brought no disgrace on a Power which had latterly been warring against half the world. The chief loss in the West Indies was Tobago, a small but wealthy island, in which British merchants had large interests. It was surrendered to the French, who recovered their former possession, St. Lucia.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 265.

On the other hand, they gave back to Britain Dominica, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Kitts, Nevis, and Montserrat. The cession of the islands of Miquelon and St. Pierre enabled France to gain a firmer footing in the Newfoundland fisheries. In Africa we gave back Senegal and Goree to France; while her stations in India, conquered by us, were likewise restored. Spain gained more largely than France. She retained her recent conquests, West Florida and Minorca, and she acquired East Florida, while recognizing the reconquest of the Bahamas by England. The Dutch ceded Negapatam but recovered Trincomalee. These conditions were ultimately ratified by the Treaty of Versailles (3rd September 1783).

Terms so favourable could not have been secured had not the Court of Versailles felt the need of peace in order to repair its shattered finances. It was the shadow of the oncoming eclipse of 1789 which warned Louis XVI and Vergennes to agree with their adversary while they were in the way with him. Nevertheless, the Shelburne Ministry deserves the highest credit for making head against internal difficulties, and for gaining terms which were far less burdensome than those imposed on France by the Seven Years' War.

This is the light in which they are regarded now. In that age, when the spoils of office rather than patriotism prompted the words and votes of members, the details of the peace afforded a welcome opportunity for undermining the Ministry. Already it seemed to be in difficulties. The waverers inside the Cabinet, or those who were chafed by the overbearing ways and personal diplomacy of Shelburne, began to leave the labouring ship. Keppel threw up the Admiralty, the Duke of Richmond absented himself from the Cabinet Councils, and Grafton and Conway seemed on the point of retiring.[1] Pitt remained faithful, but urged the need of strengthening the Ministry by alliance with Fox and his followers. Shelburne at first inclined to a compact with Lord North's party; though both he and Pitt objected strongly to the inclusion of North himself in the Cabinet. As "the lord in the blue ribbon" had his party well in hand, it was impossible to bring them in without him. It remained, then, to seek help from the Foxites. Here the bitter personal feud between Shelburne and Fox complicated the situation fatally both for Shelburne, Fox, and Pitt. But before the fight began in Parliament on the burning topic of the hour, Pitt made an attempt to bring in Fox (11th February). He acted with the consent of Shelburne and with the knowledge, and probably the grudging permission, of the King.

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[1] Keppel resigned on the question of the terms of peace; the Duke of Richmond disapproved them; Grafton was lukewarm. See their speeches, 17th February 1783 ("Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 392-6). W. W. Grenville refused to move the resolution in the Commons in favour of the peace, as Pitt urged him to do ("Dropmore P.," i, 194).

Few private interviews have been more important. On it depended the fortunes of the Ministry, and to some extent, of the Empire. If it succeeded, the terms of peace were certain to pass through Parliament. An alliance would also be formed between two political groups which had almost the same aims and were held apart only by the personal pique of their leaders. A union of the best elements of the Whigs and the Chathamites would tend to curb the power of the King, maintain the honour of the flag, and secure the passage of much-needed reforms. The defeat, or at least the postponement, of these salutary aims must necessarily result from persistence in the miserable feud. For the two men themselves that interview was fraught with grave issues. The repulse of the natural affinities was certain to doom one of them to an unnatural alliance or to helpless opposition.

It must have been with a keen sense of the importance of the crisis that these able men faced one another. The interview was soon over. Pitt stated to Fox the object of his visit; whereupon the Whig leader asked whether it was proposed that Lord Shelburne should remain First Lord of the Treasury. On Pitt answering in the affirmative, Fox remarked that it was impossible for him to form part of any Administration of which Lord Shelburne was the head. Pitt at once drew himself up (so Dundas afterwards declared), and the proud movement of his head, the significance of which many an opponent was destined to feel, ended the interview. According to Bishop Tomline, he broke off the conversation with the words: "I did not come here to betray Lord Shelburne." The breach was irreparable.[1]

Three days later, Dundas (soon to be a firm supporter of Pitt) made a despairing effort to win over Lord North, who coolly repulsed him. On that same day Fox offered his alliance to the man whom for thirteen years he had railed at as the instrument of corruption and tyranny. They agreed

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[1] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 33.

> that nothing more was required to be done in reducing the influence of the Crown by economical reform, and that on parliamentary reform every man should follow his own opinion. Mr. Fox having urged that the King should not be suffered to be his own Minister, Lord North replied: "If you mean there should not be a government by departments, I agree with you. I think it a very bad system. There should be one man, or a Cabinet, to govern the whole and direct every measure. Government by departments was not brought in by me. I found it so, and had not vigour and resolution to put an end to it. The King ought to be treated with all sort of respect and attention, but the appearance of power is all that a King of this country can have."[1]

They then began to consider the question of the distribution of offices, and finally decided to oppose the forthcoming address to the King expressing thankfulness at the peace.

Thus was formed the famous, or infamous, Coalition of 1783. With the policy of reducing the governing power of the King, it is impossible not to feel much sympathy. George III had hitherto governed England without much let or hindrance, except from Chatham and Rockingham. His narrowness and obstinacy were the chief causes of the American War; and we now know that during four years he had kept Lord North to that work, despite his remonstrances. But nothing could reconcile the new alliance to the public. A shiver of disgust ran through the nation when it transpired that Fox had plighted troth with the man whom he had threatened to impeach; and that impression was never to die away.

Further, it is doubtful whether enthusiasm for Reform was the chief motive that prompted Fox's action.[2] As we have seen, he gave up Economic Reform; and his stipulation respecting Parliamentary Reform was so half-hearted as to doom that question to failure. How could that cause thrive when it would have the effect of sending the chiefs of the future Ministry into opposite lobbies? Fox must have known enough of Parliament to see that his present conduct hopelessly impaired the strength of the reformers, in what was at all times an uphill fight. In truth, the whole incident brings into sharp relief the defects of his character, which, while rich in enthusiasms, ever lacked balance, and so frequently led him to a reckless use of most questionable means for the compassing of ends in themselves desirable.

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[1] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 37, 38; "Auckland Journals," i, 40-5. Lord John Townshend, Adam, Eden, Lord Loughborough, and George North helped to bring about the Coalition. Burke favoured the plan, also Sheridan, though later on he vehemently declared the contrary (*ibid.*, pp. 21-4).

[2] Mr. Le B. Hammond, "Life of Fox," pp. 57, 58.

In this instance his recklessness was to blast his whole career. He seems not to have considered the general impression certain to be created by his facile union with a long-loathed opponent. But the public, always prone to harsh judgements on political inconsistencies, at once inferred that he joined North, partly in order to be revenged on Shelburne for some personal slights, but mainly with the view of snatching at the sweets of office which he had of late so unaccountably cast aside. His conduct seemed oddly to blend all that was foolish in wayward boyhood with the cunning of an unscrupulous politician. The cynical majority argued that such extremes as Fox and North could meet only under the overmastering pressure of greed; and to idealists or patriots the Coalition of 1783 seemed to plunge England back into the old slough of selfishness from which the noble pride of Chatham had raised her.

The name of Chatham reminds us of the Coalition which in 1757 he framed with his former opponent, the Duke of Newcastle. The two cases have indeed been compared; but they have very little in common. Then the very existence of England was at stake. She was in the midst of a war which was being grossly mismanaged; and the union of the one able statesman of the age with the manipulator of patronage, was practically the only means of avoiding a national disaster. Now, in February 1783, hostilities were at an end; the terms of peace were arranged, and were certain to take effect, if the new Coalition allowed it. The action of the elder Pitt in 1757 was inspired by patriotism and crowned by deserved triumph. That of Fox and North rested, in part, on more sordid motives, jeopardized the conclusion of peace, threw the political world into utter confusion, and ended in disaster.

The fruits of the new Coalition were soon to appear. On Monday 17th February, the debates opened on the address to the King relative to the peace. In the Lords the opposition of Keppel and Richmond to their late colleagues was an ominous sign; but still more so was the combined attack of Foxites and

Northites in the Lower House. North spoke with something of the restraint which became a man so largely responsible for the present humiliations. He fastened on the worst parts of the treaty—the cession of Minorca and the Floridas to Spain, and the absence of any guarantees for the American Loyalists. Where he trod with measured steps, Sheridan and Fox rushed in with frothy violence. Sheridan declared that the treaty "relinquished completely everything that was glorious and great in the country"; and his chief branded it as "the most disastrous and disgraceful peace that ever this country had made." Then adverting to the understanding with North, which was generally known, Fox defended it by quoting the phrase, "Amicitiae sempiternae, inimicitiae placabiles."[1]

Pitt's speech, in reply to Fox, was not one of his happiest efforts, and Ministers were left in a minority of sixteen. He excelled himself, however, four days later during the debate on a vote of censure brought against the Administration by his former colleague, Lord John Cavendish. The attack was ingeniously made under cover of a series of resolutions, affirming that the House of Commons accepted the peace, while believing the concessions made to our enemies to be excessive, and demanding better terms for the American Loyalists. Fox spoke with his usual ardour in favour of these mutually destructive resolutions. After declaring that all who looked at the terms of peace must "blush for the ignominy of the national character," he proceeded to defend his alliance with Lord North. The times, he said, were now changed; they had to deal with a Prime Minister, Shelburne, who was "in his nature, habitudes, and principles, an enemy to the privileges of the people." They must therefore form "the strongest Coalition which may re-instate the people in their rights, privileges, and possessions."[2]

We do not know whether Pitt was aware that the orator had just bartered away the cause of Parliamentary Reform; but he certainly suspected it; and the surmise must have kindled a fire of indignation before which his bodily weakness vanished. During the long speech of his opponent he suffered from fits of vomiting which compelled him at times to hold open a small door behind him, called Solomon's porch. But when, at one o'clock in the morning, he rose to reply, all his weakness vanished. In a speech of three hours he traversed the whole ground of the treaty and reviewed the situation brought about by the recent monstrous Coalition. He fought hard for the Peace, which the present resolutions imperilled, and still more so for the maintenance of the honourable traditions of public life.

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[1] "My friendships are eternal, my hatreds can be appeased."

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 541.

After briefly adverting to the strange part now played by Fox, he continued in terms which showed that he appealed more to the nation than to Parliament.

> The triumphs of party, Sir, with which this self-appointed Minister seems so highly elate, shall never seduce me to any inconsistency which the busiest suspicion shall presume to glance at. I will never engage in political enmities without a public cause. I will never forego such enmities without the public approbation; nor will I be questioned and cast off in the face of this House by one virtuous and dissatisfied friend.[1] These, Sir, the sober and durable triumphs of reason over the weak and profligate inconsistencies of party violence; these, Sir, the steady triumphs of virtue over success itself, shall be mine, not only in my present situation but through every future condition of my life—triumphs which no length of time shall diminish, which no change of principle shall sully.

He then showed that a continuance of war would be full of peril and might lead to national bankruptcy; that Ministers were not, as at the end of the Seven Years' War, able to dictate terms of peace, and that those now proposed were as favourable as could be expected. If we had ceded Florida, we had regained the Bahamas and Providence. While losing Tobago and St. Lucia, we recovered Grenada, Dominica, St. Kitts, Nevis, and Montserrat. In Africa we should once more hold Senegambia, the best and healthiest settlement. The loss of Minorca was bearable, for the island was expensive in peace and never tenable in war. Then, adverting to the alleged betrayal of the American Loyalists, he appealed warmly for reconciliation with the United States, and still more warmly deprecated the suspicion that Congress would be guilty of the base injustice of doing nothing for those sufferers. His words have the ring of sincere conviction; but it is painful to have to add that these magnanimous hopes were doomed to disappointment.[2]

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[1] Fox's friends, Mr. Powys and Sir Cecil Wray, had reprobated his present action.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 543-50. I may here note that after the resignation

Descending to the lower levels of party strife, he declared that his opponents were aiming their shafts, not at the Treaty, but at the Earl of Shelburne. Their unnatural coalition was brought about by personal spite; and, he added with thrilling emphasis: "If this ill-omened marriage is not already solemnized, I know a just and lawful impediment, and, in the name of the public safety, I here forbid the banns." Finally, in what seemed a farewell to the cares of office, he vindicated his conduct, as inspired by the traditions of Chatham, and he appealed to the House and to the nation at large in this noble peroration:

> You may take from me, Sir, the privileges and emoluments of place, but you cannot, and you shall not, take from me those habitual and warm regards for the prosperity of Great Britain, which constitute the honour, the happiness, the pride of my life, and which I trust death alone can extinguish. And, with this consolation, the loss of power, Sir, and the loss of fortune, though I affect not to despise them, I hope I soon shall be able to forget:
>
> Laudo manentem. Si celeres quatit
> Pennas, resigno quae dedit
>   . . . probamque
> Pauperiem sine dote quaero.[1]

A member of the House relates that when he came to the words —"et mea virtute me involvo"—he paused for a moment, drew his handkerchief across his lips, and then, as if recovering from a slight embarrassment, gave the final words with thrilling effect.

The whole speech aroused an interest and emotion unequalled since the time of Chatham's mighty orations. North complimented the young Chancellor on his amazing eloquence, which had so deeply affected every member of the House, and stated that, though he himself was the object of his thunder, he

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of Shelburne, Pitt framed a Bill for regulating in friendly terms commerce with the United States. It was sharply criticized and much altered in committee; but his Bill as well as the words quoted above prove the depth of his conviction as to the need of winning back if possible the good-will of those young communities.

[1] Horace, "Odes," bk. iii, 29. From modesty he omitted the words "et mea Virtute me involvo." ("If she [Fortune] abides, I commend her. If her fleet wings quiver for flight, I resign her gifts—and hail honest, dowerless poverty as mine.")

[2] Wraxall, iii, 15.

had listened to that thunder with astonishment and delight. He then asserted that better terms might have been gained, especially from the Americans, and declared his belief that the new Coalition would greatly benefit the country. The House by a majority of seventeen decided for North and against Pitt.

In the Lords, Shelburne had a majority of thirteen; but the victory of North and Fox in the Commons led him to offer to resign office on 24th February 1783. In this honourable manner ended Pitt's first tenure of office.

CHAPTER VI

THE COALITION

Of all the public characters of this devoted country (Mr. Pitt alone excepted) there is not a man who has, or who deserves, the nation's confidence. —ROMILLY 21*st March* 1783.

IN politics, as in war, victories sometimes prove to be more disastrous than defeats. When triumph lures a leader on into ever increasing difficulties, he may well rue his seeming good fortune; while, on the other hand, the retreat of his opponents may lessen their responsibilities, and, by enabling them to concentrate, double the strength of their next blow.

Such was the case with Fox and Pitt. Fox's triumph over the former was seen by discerning friends to be of the Pyrrhic kind. He owed it to an unprincipled alliance, and for it he threw away the support of public opinion. Pitt, on the other hand, fell gloriously, fighting strenuously for terms of peace which, in the nature of things, his successors could not sensibly ameliorate. Accordingly, events worked for him and against the victors. Only a well organized party can resist the wear and tear of parliamentary strife; and it lay in the nature of things that greed of place and pension—to say nothing of political differences—should sunder these hungry and unprincipled groups.

But while the voice of prudence counselled delay, missives from Windsor urgently requested Pitt to assume the supreme command of the beaten host. Well might the King be insistent. In the young statesman, and in him alone, could he discern a possible saviour from the two-headed monster of the Coalition. As usual, he viewed the crisis from a purely personal point of view. In a characteristic letter to Shelburne he said nothing on the wider issues that were at stake, still less did he vouchsafe a word of thanks for his valuable services; but he deplored his own lot in having to reign in a most profligate age, and declared once more that he would never submit to the Coalition.

It seems probable that the credit of advising the choice of Pitt as the new Prime Minister rests with Shelburne. Certainly the idea did not originate with Henry Dundas, as he afterwards claimed; for on Monday morning, 24th February 1783, Dundas wrote to Shelburne as follows:

> My Dear Lord,
>
> I cannot refrain from troubling your Lordship with a few lines upon a subject of the most serious importance; and the particular ground of my addressing you arises from the words which dropped from you yesterday morning relative to Mr. Pitt. I did not pay much attention to them when you uttered them, but I have revolved them seriously and candidly in the course of the day yesterday, and I completely satisfied my own mind that, young as he is, the appointment of him to the Government of the country is the only step that can be taken in the present moment attended with the most distant chance of rearing up the Government of this country. . . . He is perfectly new ground, against whom no opposition can arise except what may be expected from the desperation of that lately allied faction, which I am satisfied will likewise gradually decline till at last it will consist only of that insolent aristocratical band who assume to themselves the prerogative of appointing the rulers of the kingdom. I repeat it again that I am certain the experiment will succeed if His Majesty will try it.[1]
>
> Henry Dundas.

The King warmly welcomed Shelburne's suggestion, sent for Pitt, and urged him to form a Ministry on his own terms. The young statesman, far from succumbing to the glamour of the moment, at once foresaw the difficulties of the proposal, and requested time for reflection. Dundas sat up with him through that night, going through the names of members of the House, and calculating the chances of adequate support. In a letter which Pitt wrote to his mother on the 25th, he speaks of the question as turning on that of numbers in the House. On the next day and the morning of the 27th he seemed ready to accept the King's offer, on the strength of an assurance given by Dundas that Lord North would not actively oppose him. But on the afternoon of that day he laid before the King his reasons for declining the proposal.

The interview was long and earnest. It marked the beginning of that contest of wills which only ceased with life itself. The King strove hard to gain for his service the only man of note who stood between him and the new Coalition. He plied the young Minister with every possible argument.

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[1] Chevening MSS. Yet on 25th February, Dundas wrote of the plan as "my project" (Stanhope, i, 105).

> Nothing [so the King wrote to Shelburne on that day] could get him to depart from the ground he took, that nothing less than a moral certainty of a majority in the House of Commons could make him undertake the task; for that it would be dishonourable not to succeed, if attempted; all I could obtain was that he should again try, but as fixed a declaration that, if he cannot meet with what he thinks certainty, he shall decline.[1]

We could wish to know more about this interview and to follow the mental wrestling of the Sovereign with the young barrister. Rarely, except perhaps from Chatham, had George III met with so firm a resolve not to accept office; and we may reasonably infer that the reluctance which baffled the arts of the King sprang from a deep fund of pride. Pitt scorned to be Minister by sufferance of North—a man whom he loathed. Further, why should he take up that burden at the bidding of the Sovereign whom he knew to be the chief cause of the present difficulties? Was it not better that George III and his former tool should unravel the tangle of their own making? As North and Fox for the present commanded the House of Commons, they must govern, as long as they could hold together. Reasons of varied kinds, therefore, must have led Pitt to hold back; and though he promised the King to consider the matter, we may be sure that his resolve was virtually formed.

Other names were then mooted, including those of Thomas Pitt and Earl Temple; but, as George III bitterly complained, not one of them had spirit enough to stand forth. All his efforts to escape the meshes of the Coalition were in vain. Meanwhile, public affairs went from bad to worse. "Our internal regulations (so William Grenville wrote to Temple), our loan, our commerce, our army, everything is at a stand . . . we have no money, and our troops and seamen are in mutiny."[2] But, for a whole month, nothing bent the King's purpose. It was clear that he was seeking to sow discord among his opponents.[1] In this he failed. Finally the Coalition succeeded in imposing its nominee, the Duke of Portland, on the King; but, as George insisted that his "friend," Lord Thurlow, should continue to be Lord Chancellor, the duke and his backers broke off the negotiations (18th to 20th March). At once the King sent for Pitt in the following curt note—the first in his long correspondence with him.[2]

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[1] Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne," iii, 369-70; Stanhope, i, 104-9; "Memorials of Fox," ii, 40-2. The King's letter to Shelburne refutes Horace Walpole's statement that the King made the offer very drily and ungraciously: also that Pitt's vanity was at first "staggered" by the offer.

[2] "Buckingham P.," i, 170.

> Queen's House, *March* 20, 1783.
>
> Mr. Pitt, I desire you will come here immediately.
>
> G. R.

Once more, then, the King made his offer to the young statesman. For five days he sought to bend that stubborn will, urging the needs of the public service and his own resolve never to admit the Duke of Portland and North after their treatment of him. But on 25th March Pitt politely, but most firmly, declined, on the same grounds as before. The King thereupon declared himself much hurt at his refusal to stand forth against "the most daring and unprincipled faction that the annals of this kingdom ever produced."[3] Once more he talked of retiring to Hanover and leaving to the Coalition the task of governing Great Britain. But on mentioning this scheme to his hard-headed counsellor, Lord Thurlow, he is said to have received the illuminating advice that the journey to Hanover was easy enough; but the example of James II's travels abroad warranted the conclusion that the return journey was more difficult.[4] The story is *ben trovato*; but we may doubt whether even Thurlow's assurance was equal to this ironical dissuasiveness, and whether George III would ask advice on a step never meant to be taken, and threatened merely in petulance. Equally unconvincing is the story of the King bursting into tears in the presence of the hated Duke of Portland. If the age was lachrymose,[5] George III was not.

In any case, the Coalition had conquered. They dictated their terms. George bent before the parliamentary storm, perhaps taking heart from Thurlow's words, that time and patience would cure the present evils. On the last day of March, Pitt, with the relic of Shelburne's Ministry, resigned office; and on the 2nd of April the new Ministers kissed hands. One who saw that function declared that he foresaw the fate of the Coalition Ministry; for when Fox came up for that ceremony, "George III turned back his ears and eyes just like the horse at Astley's when the tailor he had determined to throw was getting on him."

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[1] "Buckingham P.," i, 194.

[2] Pitt MSS., 103.

[3] Stanhope, i, App. III.

[4] Wraxall, iii, 36.

[5] Sichel, "Sheridan," i, 133.

The observer augured well. Fox's eagerness to mount the saddle, and Pitt's determination to stand aloof largely determined their future careers and the course of history. Success comes to the man who knows, not only when to strike swiftly and hard, but also how to bide his time. The examples of Pericles and Epaminondas; of Fabius Maximus, Caesar and Caesar Augustus in ancient history; of Louis XI, Elizabeth, Cromwell, William of Orange, Talleyrand, and even of Napoleon, might be cited as proofs of the power inherent in far-seeing patience. With Pitt's refusal of power in the spring of 1783 we may compare Napoleon's prudent reserve in the French political game of the years 1797-8, based as it was on his declaration to Talleyrand in October 1797: "It is only with prudence, wisdom and great dexterity that obstacles are surmounted and important ends attained. . . . I see no impossibility in attaining, in the course of a few years, those splendid results of which the heated and enthusiastic imagination catches a glimpse, but which the extremely cool, persevering and positive man alone can grasp." Pitt's great speech of 21st February 1783 showed him to possess imaginative gifts and ambition of a high order; his refusal of office, owing to the stubborn facts of arithmetic, was the outcome of those cool and calculating instincts without which aspiring genius is a balloon devoid of ballast.

The reception accorded by the public to the Coalition Ministry was far from flattering. No sooner were the names of Ministers known, on 2nd April 1783, than indignation ran high. The Duke of Portland, as First Lord of the Treasury, was seen to be an ornamental figure, easily controllable by Fox. The two Secretaries of State were North and Fox, the latter leading the House of Commons; and this close official union of two men who had spent their lives in vilifying each other was generally reprobated.[2] Fox, formerly the bitterest of North's revilers, was

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[1] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 28.

[2] Wraxall, iii, 89, 143-5.

held to have betrayed his Whig principles; and his once enthusiastic constituents at Westminster, at his re-election refused him a hearing, shouting him down several times. The conduct of North, the reviled, seemed incredibly base and unmanly. For the rest, Lord John Cavendish (dubbed by Selwyn "the learned canary-bird") took Pitt's place at the Exchequer; Lord Stormont became President of the Council, the Earl of Carlisle, Lord Privy Seal; and Keppel returned to the Admiralty. The foregoing formed the Cabinet. As the King was forced to part with his man, Thurlow, the Lord Chancellor's seal was put in commission, Lord Loughborough (formerly Mr. Wedderburn, a man apt at betrayal) becoming first commissioner. Burke and Sheridan were rewarded with the subordinate posts of Paymaster of the Forces and Secretary to the Treasury. Thus the Whig members were in the ascendant, though North's party predominated in the House of Commons. Temple resigned the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, which went, after an embarrassing delay, to one of Fox's boon companions at Brooks's, Lord Northington.[1]

Wilberforce, with his usual power of hitting off a situation, declared that the Fox-North Coalition inherited the defects of its progenitors, the violence of Fox and the corruption of North. This was the general opinion. As for George III, he raged against this unnatural union. He could not mention the subject without falling into the flurried incoherent kind of talk which afterwards marked the on-coming of attacks of lunacy. Private hatred of Fox, as the man who led astray the Prince of Wales into the equally odious paths of gambling and political opposition, fed the King's animosity against the Whig orator as the foe of the constitution. But the vials of his wrath were poured forth on North, for his betrayal of the royal confidence lavished on him for a decade. On 1st April, George III informed Temple that he hoped the nation's eyes would soon be opened, and that the Pitts and Grenvilles would deliver him from the thraldom of the Coalition. For the present, he would certainly refuse to grant any honours asked for by the new Ministry.[2] As the greed of the Coalition was notorious, the situation thus became piquant in the extreme. Amusement at the irony of the situation must have helped, in Pitt's case, to lighten the disappointment of retiring from office. Certainly he was never downcast. Wilberforce's journal shows him to have been a frequent and a joyous visitor to Wimbledon. This was the time of the spring-sowing of the flower-beds of Lauriston House with the fragments of Ryder's opera hat. (See Chapter XII.)

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 197-212. Mr. Sichel ("Sheridan," ii, ch. ii), following the earlier biographer, Thomas Moore, proves that Sheridan sought to dissuade Fox from the coalition with North. This is doubtless true. But determined opposition should have led him to refuse office.

[2] "Buckingham P.," i, 189, 219.

Other and more practical fruits of his hopefulness were his efforts for Parliamentary Reform, clouded over though that cause was by the alliance of Whigs and the former "King's Friends." Acting not as a partisan (for, just before resigning office, he informed the House that he belonged to no party), he introduced a motion on 7th May for the Reform of Parliament. On this occasion London and Kent seemed to take an interest in the motion, and the approaches to St. Stephen's as well as the galleries were thronged by petitioners in favour of Reform. The freeholders of Kent, the householders of the Tower Hamlets, and the electors of Westminster (the last headed by Fox!), came in great numbers to give weight to their petitions. Horace Walpole noted that Kent and Essex had joined the Quintuple Alliance (*i.e.*, of counties) in favour of Reform.[1]

In due course Pitt rose to bring in his motion. He claimed that the disasters of the past years had at length caused the people "to turn their eyes inward on themselves" to find out the cause of the evil. No one could now doubt that the radical fault in the constitution was the secret influence of the Crown as exerted on the House of Commons. For the redress of this evil three plans had been proposed, first, the extension of the franchise to every man—a proposal which he scouted as both impracticable and even undesirable, seeing that the minority must then hold themselves to be slaves to the majority. (It is difficult to follow Pitt here; for every electoral system implies a majority and minority; and hardship arises only when the majority is subservient to the minority—as was the case in 1783.) Their forefathers, he added, had never contemplated giving a vote to every man, and the scheme was "a mere speculative proposition that may be good in theory but which it would be absurd and chimerical to endeavour to reduce to practice." These words should be noted. For they refute the slander that Pitt "ratted" from the cause of Reform in and after 1790, when it was based on the Jacobin theory of universal suffrage, which he had always repudiated.

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[1] Horace Walpole's Letters (8th May 1783). He thought Pitt's motion "most dangerous. We know pretty well what good or evil the present state of the House of Commons can do. What an enlargement might achieve no man can tell." Later on he notes that Pitt was very little supported, but shone marvellously in debate.

Pitt's second proposal of Reform was to abolish the "rotten boroughs." He confessed that they were "deformities" in our system, but he felt that they could not be removed without endangering the whole pile. The third proposal seemed to him far better, namely, to add a number of members for the counties and the metropolis. He summed up his contentions in three Resolutions: (1) for the prevention of bribery and undue expense at elections; (2) the disfranchisement of boroughs where corruption was proven; (3) an addition to members of counties and of the metropolis. The details of these proposals were to be specified in a Bill, if the Resolutions were carried. They met with support from Fox, while their very limited character, which Sheridan ridiculed, commended them to Dundas and Thomas Pitt, who previously had opposed Reform.[1] As a pledge of his sincerity, Thomas Pitt offered to surrender his rights over the parliamentary borough of Old Sarum.

All was of no avail. North, Colonel Luttrell, Lord Mulgrave, and others declaimed against any change in the glorious constitution. The House by a majority of one hundred and forty-four reprobated the dangerous spirit of innovation which was abroad. Doubtless the demoralization of the Whigs made defeat inevitable. Pitt himself spoke with less than his usual effectiveness; and the absence of petitions from the new manufacturing towns showed that the country at large cared little for the question. This apathy seems to us unaccountable until we remember that Manchester, Leeds, and Halifax tamely suffered Richard Cromwell to annul the act of enfranchisement which the great Oliver had bestowed upon them. Evidently the age-long torpor still lay upon the land.

In the rest of the session, Pitt brought in measures for effecting retrenchment in the public offices. He commented on such abuses as the following: that the chief clerk of the navy office received a salary of £250 a year, but ten times that amount in gifts, and other clerks in the same proportion. The Secretary of the Post Office raised his salary of £500 to a total of £3,000 by a 2½ per cent. charge on all packets—a curiously cumbrous method of redress. The expense of stationery at the office of Lord North during his term at the Treasury was £1,300 a year, one item being £340 for whip-cord! By careful economies Pitt hoped to save the nation £40,000 a year. The debate was rendered remarkable by a speech from Burke. The great man was smarting under the censure of the House for reinstating two dishonest officials, and had betrayed the Celtic sensitiveness of his nature by drearily ranting until Fox and Sheridan fairly pulled him to his seat. He now rallied Pitt on "prying into the little perquisites of little men in little offices, while he suffered the greatest abuses to exist in the offices under his eye. He seemed to have that nice olfactory nerve which could smell a ball of horsedung a thousand miles off, but which was not affected by the stench of a dunghill under his very window." Burke, however, failed to substantiate the latter part of his malodorous simile. The measure passed the Commons, only to perish in the Lords. Keppel denied that there were any abuses at the Admiralty; the Duke of Portland opined that Pitt's reforms would cost as much as they saved; and Stormont declared that they would be highly inconvenient.[1] The same fate befell a measure, which Pitt warmly supported, for lessening expenses at elections.

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[1] Mr. Sichel ("Sheridan," ii, 36) admits the strong personal element in Sheridan's opposition to Pitt.

In his speech on Lord John Cavendish's Budget, Pitt showed a practical knowledge of finance which enabled him trenchantly to expose the weak points of his successor's proposals; and he further pointed out the best means for launching a loan on the most favourable terms. His reputation gained in solidity during the session; and if his speeches, after the great effort of 21st February, lacked brilliance, they exhibited his capacity and his grasp of affairs.

Ministers, on the other hand, lost ground, owing to their own blunders and the widening of the gulf between their discordant sections. A case in point was their treatment of the question of the allowance for the Prince of Wales. As will appear later more in detail, the relations between the King and the Prince were already so strained that the Ministry—"my son's Ministry," the King sometimes called it—must have known the question to be thorny. The tastes of George III being as frugal as those of his son were extravagant, a clear understanding with the King seemed the first essential to a settlement. Yet Fox and his supporters in the Cabinet prevailed on the other Ministers, rather reluctantly, to allot the sum of £100,000 a year to the Prince, and that, too, without consulting the King. According to Horace Walpole, the proposal came to light during a casual conversation between the King and the Duke of Portland on 11th June. The account given in the "Fox Memorials" seems, however, to convict George III of inconsistency.[1] In any case, he angrily declaimed against the proposal, as showing that Ministers, despite their professions of economy, "were ready to sacrifice the public interests to the wishes of *an ill-advised young man*"; he declared his readiness to allow the Prince £50,000 a year from the Civil List, so as not to burden the public. This was the sum which he himself had received as Prince of Wales; and he held strong ground in proposing to support his bachelor son on a similar allowance.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 926, 945, 1,114.

This was the mine sprung upon the Ministry on 16th June. It promised to end their existence; and Fox believed that the King would seize the opportunity to dismiss Ministers, dissolve Parliament, and appeal to the country on the cry of economy, paternal authority, and no mischief-making between father and son. Doubtless he would have done so but for the very speedy compliance of the Prince of Wales with his expressed wishes—an act of submission due less to the filial devotion of the Prince than to his desire to save his favourite from a crushing defeat at the polls. Ultimately, on 23rd June, the House agreed to vote the sum of £60,000 for the present needs of the Prince, as regards debts and the furnishing of Carlton House, and £50,000 a year out of the Civil List. The incident led to some regrettable complications. Fox seems to have attributed the King's sudden anger to an intrigue of Pitt, whom he dubbed "an unscrupulous opposer."[2] Further, the Prince thenceforth more than ever looked on his father and the opponents of Fox as his own personal enemies, in that they bound him down to an insufficient allowance, which he felt no scruple in exceeding. The wretched business of the Prince of Wales's debts, and even that of the Regency, resulted in no small measure from the bad blood engendered in the strife of June 1783.

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[1] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 113. Jesse, "Memoirs of George III," iii, 435, states that the Shelburne Ministry had named £100,000 as the allowance for the Prince. I find no proof of this.

[2] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 113, 119.

The King, also, as we can now see by the new light which the Dropmore Papers have thrown on events, watched the course of affairs more closely than ever in order to pave the way to office for the Pitts and Grenvilles. But his rancour did not blunt his prudence. He was resolved not to exchange one set of masters for another. If Pitt came in, it must be on terms favourable to the Crown. George saw Temple after his abandonment of the cares of State at Dublin Castle, and soon began to sound him and Pitt as to their ideas on a future Ministry.[1]

There was one grave objection to Pitt, namely, his zeal for Reform. Seeing that the Coalition Ministry was lukewarm on this subject, the King strove to ensure similar complaisance on the part of its successor. He therefore commissioned his secret bargainer, Thurlow, to see Pitt and clear up this question. The ex-Lord Chancellor invited his former colleague to dinner on 19th July, five days after the end of the session. He was very wary in his overtures, and Pitt complained to Grenville that he had a very good meal, but little information. Thurlow was profuse in hints and innuendos, which Pitt gauged at their real value. First he depicted the situation as by no means unfavourable to the King, who had gone through the worst when he admitted the Foxites to office. On Pitt suggesting that perhaps he would become reconciled to them, Thurlow hastened to add that that was impossible, especially after the affair of the Prince's allowance. The "King's friend" then turned the conversation to the subject of Parliamentary Reform and the influence of the Crown.

> His object (so Pitt wrote to Earl Temple) was to insinuate that a change was not so necessary to the King; and to endeavour to make it (if it should take place) rather our act than his; and on that ground to try whether terms might not be imposed that could not otherwise. This is so totally contrary to every idea we both entertain that I thought it necessary to take full care to counteract it. I stated in general that if the King's feelings did not point strongly to a change, it was not what

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[1] "Buckingham P.," i, 303-5.

> we sought. But that if they did, and we could form a permanent system, consistent with our principles, and on public ground, we should not decline it. I reminded him how much I was personally pledged to Parliamentary Reform on the principles I had publicly explained, which I should support on every seasonable occasion. I treated as out of the question any idea of measures being taken to extend [Crown] influence, though such means as are fairly in the hands of Ministers would undoubtedly be to be exerted. And I said that I wished those with whom I might act, and the King (if he called upon me) to be fully apprized of the grounds on which I should necessarily proceed. . . .[1]

This is a declaration of the highest importance. If Thurlow was not very explicit, Pitt certainly was; and it is clear that he fathomed the intentions of George III. They were, in brief, to use the present unsatisfactory state of things as an inducement to a patriotic and ambitious young man to come forward as a "King's friend," taking up the place which North's defection had left vacant. Shelving the problem of Parliamentary Reform, Pitt was to govern for the King and by means of his influence. The young statesman saw the snare, skilfully evaded it, and let it be understood that, if he took office, he would come in on his own terms, not on those of the King. Firm in the alliance of the Grenvilles, and all who detested the Coalition Ministry, he needed not to supplicate the royal favour. Once more he would bide his time, until the King sued for his support. Temple in his reply warmly commended his sound sense and honourable conduct, acknowledging that Pitt was pledged to Reform, so long as there was any chance of success.

A time of skilful balancing now ensued. The King, disappointed at Pitt's independent attitude, took Temple's advice, and decided to leave to his Ministers the odium of concluding peace, and of bringing in proposals of Reform which would certainly disappoint some and exasperate others of their following. It is clear, however, that, after his annoyance at the question of the Prince of Wales's allowance, George resolved to dismiss his Ministers as soon as their popularity waned, and to recur to personal rule, if he could find a serviceable instrument. It was generally known by the end of the session that Pitt might play that part as soon as he chose. George hinted

[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 216; also Earl Stanhope's "Miscellanies," ii, 23-6, who rightly places the date as 20th July.

as much to Thurlow, who passed it on to the political world. The news was well known when Pitt went down to Brighthelmstone for sea-bathing in August.[1]

Other causes, however, besides the aloofness of Pitt, concurred to postpone the crisis. The Cabinet, feeling its position insecure, was in no haste to sign the definitive treaties of peace, feeling the interval of uncertainty to be some guarantee of continuance in office. There was also some hope that the Czarina, Catharine II, intent as she was on plans against Turkey, would court our alliance and thus end our isolation.[2] Thus the state of party affairs in England, as well as the changing ambitions of the Czarina, helped to postpone the final settlement; but ultimately the treaties were signed on 3rd September at Versailles. They varied very slightly from the preliminaries which Ministers, when in opposition, had so violently attacked Apart from a stipulation for the safeguarding of British property in the ceded island of Tobago, and the better definition of our rights in the gum trade, there was no material change. The American Loyalists, for whom Fox and Burke had so passionately pleaded, were left in the same position as in the preliminary treaty. The Coalition Ministry in five months of bargaining secured no better terms from France and Spain than Shelburne had arranged. Fox and North, who had blamed their predecessors for failing to make a commercial agreement with the United States, now had to confess their own failure. Finally, the Preliminaries with Holland, signed on 2nd September, showed that Fox, who, with Sheridan, had declaimed against the expected retrocession of Trincomalee to the Dutch, now consented to it. Negapatam, a far less commanding post, was retained.

These actions exposed Ministers to the charge of gross inconsistency in ratifying conditions of peace against which they had inveighed in unmeasured terms. On 11th November Pitt rallied them on this topic, and then, soaring from the low levels of partisan warfare, to the heights of statesmanlike survey, he uttered these words:

> The nation has a right to expect that, without delay, a complete commercial system, suited to the novelty of our situation, will be laid before

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[1] "Buckingham P.," i, 304; "Rutland P.," iii, 70; Stanhope, "Misc.," ii, 32-5.

[2] *Ibid.*, i, 218; "Memorials of Fox," ii, 131-9.

Parliament. I am acquainted with the difficulty of the business and will not attribute the delay hitherto to any neglect on the part of Ministers. I am willing to ascribe it to the nature of the negotiation; but I expect that the business will soon be brought forward, not by piece-meal, but that one grand system of commerce, built upon the circumstances of the times, will be submitted to the House for their consideration.[1]

This is the first sign of Pitt's resolve to give effect to the teachings of Adam Smith, and to aid in founding on the ruins of our old colonial system a fabric far sounder and more beneficent. It is further significant, as showing the absence of factiousness in the Opposition, that the address to the King of thanks for the peace was carried unanimously.

We have looked ahead in order to glance at Pitt's conduct respecting the treaties of peace concluded on 3rd September; let us turn to his movements during the vacation. First he ran down to Brighthelmstone to take some dips in the sea; and then struck away westwards towards Somerset for a flying visit to Lady Chatham at Burton Pynsent. Next, after a short stay at Kingston Hall, Bankes's country house in Dorset, in company with Wilberforce and Eliot, he returned to town on 7th September in order to look into the political situation. He found that the Ministry was losing favour mainly because the King refused to grant any peerages at their request. Apart from this, however, there was no sign of a collapse. That stormy petrel of politics, Lord Thurlow, was abroad; and Pitt probably considered it tactful not to linger about town, but to visit the Continent. Before setting out, he attended the *levée* at St. James's on 10th September; and the King inquired the time of his return "in a rather significant manner."[2]

On the next day he met Wilberforce and Eliot at Canterbury, and on the 12th they crossed to Calais. He found the journey to Reims more comfortable, and the appearance of the people more prosperous, than he had expected; but "the face of the country the dullest I ever saw." The reception of the party at Reims, where they proposed to improve their French before proceeding to Paris, had a spice of novelty. Each of the three friends had trusted to the others to provide the needful introductions. As a result they were able only to obtain one introduction, through the London banker, Thellusson, and this proved to be to a grocer, whom they found behind his counter selling figs and raisins. Somewhat crestfallen, the three *milords anglais* returned to their inn. Not for ten days did they gain an *entrée* to the intendant of Reims, and through him to the Archbishop. His Grace was by no means an awe-inspiring personage; he figures in Wilberforce's letters as a jolly fellow, about forty years of age, who played billiards like other people. The three friends also met an Abbé de Lageard, "a fellow of infinite humour," who used to entertain them by visits of five or six hours at a stretch. To him, early in their acquaintance, Pitt mooted a grievance, that there, in the middle of Champagne, they could get no wine that was even tolerable. The abbé thereupon entertained them at his house with the best wine of the province, and with five hours of breezy talk.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 1143.

[2] "Dropmore P.," i, 219, 220; Stanhope, "Misc.," ii, 35.

Pitt, so we learn from Wilberforce, was the most fluent of the visitors on these occasions. His ear, "quick for every sound but music," readily caught the intonations of the language, and he soon conversed with ease and fair accuracy. Some few of his *mots* are preserved by Wilberforce. In answer to the abbé's inquiry about his opinion of French institutions, Pitt replied: "Sir, you have no political liberty, but as for liberty in civil affairs, you have more than you think." His opinion on the durability of the English constitution is even more surprising. "The part of our constitution which will first perish is the prerogative of the King and the authority of the House of Peers."[1] None of Pitt's sayings is more remarkable than this, uttered as it was long before the storms of the French Revolution, and after the British monarchy had easily weathered the Atlantic gale. Possibly the conviction here recorded helps to explain why, at the close of the year, Pitt undertook to support the monarchy, in order to maintain that balance of the English constitution which all thinkers (especially Montesquieu) had praised as its peculiar excellence.

The third of the *mots* mentioned by Wilberforce illustrates the generosity of Pitt's character, a trait in which his opponents, judging from his generally cold exterior, believed him to be deficient. On the abbé expressing surprise at so moral a country as

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 38.

England allowing itself to be governed by Fox, a man signally deficient in private character, Pitt replied: "Ah! you have not been under the wand of the magician." Out of the varied scintillations of wit and gaiety with which Pitt brightened this five weeks' sojourn in France, we catch a glimpse of these three sparks alone. Doubtless the weakness of Wilberforce's eyes at that time accounts for the tantalizingly meagre entries in his diary; but, seeing how elusive a figure Pitt is, we must be thankful even for these slight jottings.

We are therefore left wondering about the intercourse between the three Englishmen and Talleyrand, who was then staying with his uncle, the Archbishop of Reims. Of their brilliant conversations—for where Talleyrand was dullness could not dwell—we know nothing. Talleyrand and Pitt, we are told, instructed one another in their mother tongues and exchanged ideas, especially on literature and the advantages of Free Trade.[1] What a subject for Landor, this interchange of thoughts between the ablest young men of the age, who agreed on all the essentials of politics and yet were soon to be forced by destiny into bitter conflict! How different the future might have been had Talleyrand had enough strength and straightforwardness to become chief of the French Republic!

The stay of the three friends at Reims ended on 9th October, owing to Pitt's desire to reach Paris in time to see George Rose, a Secretary of the Treasury, who had been travelling on the Continent with Lord Thurlow. There can be little doubt that Pitt hoped to hear from him news respecting the situation in London; for they had confidential converse, in which Pitt gained over Rose completely to his side.[2] At Paris he had intercourse with Lafayette, Benjamin Franklin, and many other celebrities. By special invitation they shared in the gala festivities of the Court at Fontainebleau, and there saw not only the French Ministers and chief nobles, but also the King and Queen (15th-19th October). That was the heyday of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The conclusion of the Peace of Versailles with England seemed to place France without question at the head of the political world. She had sundered the Empire of her rival, and with ordinary wisdom she might hope to keep the lead as a commercial and colonizing power. Strong in the alliance of Austria and Spain, with her friendship courted by the United States, Prussia, Sweden, and Holland—at times by the Czarina Catharine—France seemed to be high above the reach of adverse fortune. The prestige of the monarchy was as yet undimmed by the affair of the Diamond Necklace. The factious opposition of the Parlements had scarcely begun; and the days of hunting and festivity at Fontainebleau must have realized those visions of charm and beauty in which Burke has enshrined Marie Antoinette, "glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour and joy."

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[1] Lady Blennerhassett, "Life of Talleyrand," i, 46. It is strange that the Talleyrand Memoirs" do not mention the meeting.

[2] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 32.

By her side at Court and in the hunting field was that strange opposite, her husband. What the friends thought of Louis XVI in hunting attire is shown by Wilberforce's note—"clumsy strange figure in immense boots." Whether the King spoke to them is doubtful, for his words were ever few, and etiquette forbade his conversing much with foreigners.[1] But the Queen, with her usual vivacity and wit, rallied them upon their friend, the grocer, at Reims. The courtiers often crowded round Pitt (so Wilberforce recalls), "and he behaved with great spirit, though he was sometimes a little bored when they talked to him about Parliamentary Reform." At Fontainebleau Pitt met Lafayette at dinner in company with the American Minister, Franklin. Again we long to know of the converse of these representative men. Only one scrap survives, namely, that Pitt informed the Frenchman, whom his admirers termed "the hero of both worlds," that his principles were too democratic for him.[2] When the tempest burst upon Western Europe, this soon became apparent.

Necker, the Minister who in 1789 aspired to ride on the winds and control the storm, was desirous of allying his family with that of Pitt. The ex-Controller-General of French Finances and his ambitious consort sought to strengthen their claims on the Government for a return to office, by an alliance with a powerful family. What alliance could be so brilliant for these Genevese Protestants as with the son of Chatham? We now know for certain that Necker and his wife urgently wished for this union; for a year later the mother, when seriously ill, wrote to her daughter (the future Mme. de Staël) in these terms:

> I did desire that you should marry Mr. Pitt. I wished to confide you

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[1] Wraxall, iii, 122.

[2] "Early Life of Samuel Rogers," 134.

to the care of a husband who had made for himself a great name; I also could have wished for a son-in-law to whose care I could commend your poor father, and who would feel the full weight of his charge. You were not disposed to give me this satisfaction. Well! All is now forgiven.[1]

Clearly the match was to have been of an eleemosynary character; and all who rejoice in the eager exuberance of the life of Mme. de Staël cannot be surprised at her refusal, even when a young girl, to become a testamentary asset in the life of her father. Whether her repugnance at the idea was further increased by seeing Pitt in one of his "bored" moods, we do not know. Indeed it is uncertain whether they ever met. If we may judge from the sketch of Pitt written by Wilberforce in 1821, the affair was mooted in the frigid bargaining manner usual with French parents. Horace Walpole, a close friend of M. Necker, remarked to Lord Camden, who thereupon passed it on to Pitt, that the Neckers had so much respect for him that, if he claimed the hand of their daughter, he would not be refused—by the parents. What would have happened when Mlle. Necker came to be asked must be left to the imagination.[2]

From the charms of the French Court and the meshes of matrimonial schemes Pitt was suddenly called away. A special messenger bade him return at once to London. What he had all along hoped now came to pass. The King's dislike of his Ministers had overcome all other feelings, and he now appealed to Pitt to free him from the toils of the Coalition. The friends spent twenty-four hours in a carriage, then suffered the usual miseries of a Channel passage, and reached London on 24th October.

The situation was serious. Though delivered from fear of war, the country was beset by many perils. Consols were on the decline. The state of Ireland was alarming. The Associations of Volunteers overshadowed the Government at Dublin, and seemed about to dictate terms to that at Westminster. Their attitude aroused keen resentment, seeing that the legislative independence of Ireland had been proclaimed to be the cure for all her evils. "What! (exclaimed Horace Walpole) Would they throw off our Parliament and yet amend it." Worst of all, perhaps, was the almost complete indifference of Britons to the political situation. The same rather cynical observer had already noted that no one, except interested politicians, really cared who was in, or out of, office. His words deserve quotation:

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[1] D'Haussonville, "The Salon of Mme. Necker," ii, 50 (Eng. ed.).

[2] "Private Papers of W. Wilberforce," 58. Strange to say, Horace Walpole does not mention the affair in his letters.

> Our levity is unlike that of the French. They turn everything into a jest, an epigram, or a ballad. We are not pleasant but violent, and yet remember nothing for a moment. This was not our character formerly. . . . Can the people be much attached to any man if they think well of none? Can they hate any man superlatively if they think ill of all? In my own opinion we have no positive character at present at all. We are not so bad as most great nations have been when sinking. We have no excessive vices, no raging animosities.[1]

The passage is interesting in more ways than one. Milton dubbed us fickle and alleged our insular situation as the cause.[2] Addison in one of his essays repeated the charge, which was perfectly natural early in the eighteenth century. Further, Horace Walpole's criticism is remarkable as that of a shrewd observer during what he termed a time of "comfortable calm." He saw the two leading nations, as it were, drifting sluggishly in a Sargasso Sea of politics after one storm; and they and he never suspected the approach of a far more terrible tempest. Neither in London nor Paris had any inspiring personality come to the front. Pitt had not fully emerged. Robespierre was intent on his briefs at Arras; the Corsican, who was to quicken the pulse of all peoples, still studied under the monks of Brienne; and Horace Walpole could therefore complain of the pettiness of politics, the aimless brawlings of Westminster, the lighter vagaries of Versailles, and the dullness of the world.

At London all was soon to change. Though Fox and North kept their majority solid on the question of the peace, yet they came to grief over a measure of almost equal importance. On 18th November, amidst scenes of unequalled excitement, Fox brought forward his India Bill; and on a question where vast patronage was at stake passions rose to fever heat. Indian affairs will be treated more fully in another chapter; and it must suffice to state here that the East India Company was in a deplorable condition, mainly owing to the war with Hyder Ali and the insubordination and rapacity of the Company's servants, which led to abuses degrading to Britain and oppressive to the natives of India. According to the terms of North's Regulating Act of 1773, Parliament had the right of intervention in all matters of high policy; but in one important question the Company had set its behests at naught. In April 1782 a vote of censure was passed on the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, and the Company was requested to recall him. The Court of Directors issued an order to this effect; but the Court of Proprietors reversed their decision, and Hastings was left in a position ambiguous and irritating to all parties. Consequently dictates of policy and the interests of the nation compelled Parliament to assert its paramount authority.

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[1] Horace Walpole (24th Feb. 1783).

[2] Milton, "A Free Commonwealth."

But the manner of the intervention and the act itself were alike extraordinary. The new India Bill was the joint work of Fox and Burke with some aid from the law-officers of the Crown. It has often been said, on the scantiest of evidence, to have been framed mainly by Burke; but the clauses which abrograted the Charter of the East India Company and vested the control of Indian affairs chiefly in Parliament, bear the imprint of the mind of Fox rather than of the more cautious and conservative statesman.[1] In strict propriety the measure ought to have originated with Lord North. He privately expressed his approval, and then, alleging indisposition, stayed away from Parliament on the day of its introduction.[2]

Fox opened his case in a speech of great power. He dilated on the ills resulting from the disorders in the Company's service, and, in particular, from the ambition of Warren Hastings. He then showed the tendency of the parliamentary reports on Indian affairs, and claimed that, in the virtual bankruptcy of the Company (which could not discharge its debts to the Crown), Parliament had the right to take the supreme control of its territories. We may pause here to notice that the Directors of the Company stoutly denied the assertion as to their bankruptcy, and claimed that, when its expenses were reduced to a peace footing, the Company's creditors would be in a better position than any creditors in Europe.[1] Their printed report of 23rd January 1784 laid stress on the heavy charge involved by conquests in India "which the wisdom of the nation has given up for equivalents in other parts of the world." It also claimed the payment of £260,687, the charge incurred by the Company for the maintenance of French prisoners in the Seven Years' War. The Directors further stated that, if Government would check the very extensive smuggling in tea (an article which formed the most valuable of the monopolies of the Company), more than double the amount would be sold by legitimate means. These facts should be borne in mind, as the Company succeeded in spreading a conviction that the attack of Fox was unjust.

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[1] See, too, "Memorials of Fox," ii, 98. Probably the second Bill contained more of the suggestions of Burke.

[2] Wraxall, iii, 146, 155.

In the rest of his speech Fox detailed his proposals for effecting drastic changes in India, and explained the reasons for separating administrative affairs from purely mercantile affairs. Many authorities claimed that the territories of the Company belonged in reality to the Crown; others denied this claim. On one point all must agree, that the Crown could not possibly deal with "a remote and difficult trade." Accordingly he sought to form "a mixed system of government, adapted to the mixed complexion of our interests in India." For administrative work he proposed to establish a Board of seven commissioners, nominated by Parliament, for three or five years—four years was the term finally suggested—having full power to appoint and dismiss officers in India, and complete control over its government. The Board was to sit in London, "under the very eye of Parliament," and the minutes of its meetings were to be open to inspection by Parliament. If this experiment succeeded, he proposed that in future the King should nominate the seven commissioners, and he was to fill up vacancies that might occur in the meantime. As for the mercantile interests of the Company, they were to be managed by a subordinate Board or Council, consisting of eight members chosen by Parliament from among the larger proprietors.

He further proposed to remedy the worst abuses in India in a second Bill which would abolish the holding of monopolies, such as that for opium, which had been jobbed away to the son of a former chairman of the Company. Security of tenure would be granted to the Zamindars, or native landlords, and the acceptance of presents by the Company's servants in India—a fertile source of corruption and oppression—would be strictly forbidden. Fox admitted that the private influence of the Crown, even in its worst days, was nothing compared with that of the East India Company, and wisely abstained for the present from naming the seven commissioners whom he proposed to appoint.[1]

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[1] Paper dated 4th Dec. 1783, in Pitt MSS., 354.

Here was the weak point of an otherwise excellent measure; and Pitt, towards whom all eyes were directed, fastened upon it. While admitting the urgent need of reform, he deprecated the abrogation of all the charters and privileges of an ancient Company under the plea of necessity. "Is not necessity," he said, "the plea of every illegal exertion of power? Is not necessity the pretence of every usurpation? Necessity is the argument of tyrants: it is the creed of slaves." Further, what evils must result if that formidable political weapon, the patronage of the Company, were transferred to the Ministers then in power, and finally to the Crown? On the one side it would tend to the grossest corruption, on the other, to despotism.[2]

Pitt, it will be seen, opposed the measure owing to the indirect but inevitable consequences which it would entail in the vitiated state of affairs then existing in Parliament, where an unwholesome Coalition held together only with the aim of enjoying the spoils of office and even richer booty in the future.[3] The possession of the enormous patronage of the India Company opened up golden vistas that fired the imaginations even of the dull squires who trooped after Lord North. As for the far livelier followers of Fox, they were jubilant at prospects which promised not only places in the East, but a long lease of power at St. Stephen's. Their opponents were alike depressed and indignant. A former friend of Fox, Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, commented on the "spirit of ambition, rapacity and confiscation" that characterized his proposals; and the bad impression caused by the patronage section of his Bill was intensified when it appeared that four of the seven new commissioners were to be declared Foxites, better known at Brooks's Club than at the India House, namely, Lord Fitzwilliam, Frederick Montagu, Sir Henry

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 1187-1208.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1209-11.

[3] I cannot agree with Lecky's statement (iv, 293) that Pitt's charges were extravagant. Seven partisan commissioners, jobbing away vast patronage, would have been a canker in the State, whether they acted for their party or the Crown.

Fletcher, and Robert Gregory. In Lord North's interest there were his son, Colonel North, Viscount Lewisham, and Sir Gilbert Elliot.

The appointment of seven pronounced partisans to these posts of almost unbounded responsibility wrecked the measure. In itself the Bill contained many excellent features. The transference of governing power from the Company to Parliament in conjunction with the Crown, on terms ultimately favourable to the latter, was a bold step; but much could be said for it, and Pitt certainly overshot the limits of fair criticism in his first speech. If Fox and North had chosen the seven commissioners fairly from among all three parties, the mouths of gainsayers would have been stopped. Now, however, the partisan corollary to the measure justified the most vehement strictures. A flood of satire was poured on the Bill. Two caricatures in particular had a very wide circulation, probably at the expense of the threatened Company. One represented Fox as Samson carrying off the ruins of the East India House; the second, by Sayer, who soon became Pitt's man and received a small post from him, showed Fox as Carlo Khan riding into Delhi on an elephant having the face of Lord North, and preceded by Burke as trumpeter.

Pitt wrote privately to the Governor of the Company suggesting that its prestige would be enhanced if a meeting of its creditors could be arranged and a declaration could be procured that they would allow ample time for the discharge of their claims.[1] But caricatures, suggestions, and petitions were needless. The same facts which discredited the Bill in the country whetted the eagerness of the ministerial majority in Parliament. At the second reading Pitt briskly renewed his attacks; and he now had the support of William Grenville in a statesmanlike speech, which lacked "the commanding tone, the majesty, and all the captivating rotundity and splendour of Pitt's eloquence," but equalled it in argumentative power.[2] Dundas, Jenkinson, and Scott (the future Lord Eldon), reinforced the assault: but all was in vain. Burke, in a majestic oration, proclaimed that the Bill would save India from manifold evils which he depicted with righteous indignation.[3] But material interests told more than eloquence and morality. The influence of Ministers and the hopes of their followers ensured the speedy passing of this complex and far-reaching measure through the Commons by a final majority of 208 votes to 102 (3rd December).

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[1] Pitt MSS., 102. Letter of 25th Nov. 1783.

[2] Wraxall, iii, 161.

[3] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 1312-86.

This was a heavy blow to the Opposition, especially to Pitt, who had said that he would fight the whole Bill, clause by clause. Horace Walpole wrote two days later that Pitt had slunk from the contest, but that the check would do him good, dazzled as he had been by his premature fame. Walpole also remarked that, while excelling Chatham in logical power, the son had much less firmness and perseverance. Readers of those charming letters will note with some amusement that in the middle of the next month, Walpole wrote that nothing but obstinacy prevented Pitt resigning his post as Prime Minister. After that Walpole gave up the rôle of political prophet.

For now there occurred a series of events which taught modesty to wiseacres. The King intervened in a surprising manner. In the House of Lords influence from above was suddenly pitted against the interests of the nether world. George III had long been awaiting a fit opportunity for tripping up the hated Ministry. A few weeks before, he had covered Fox and North with ridicule in front of the whole Court. Acting on the first rumour of the death of Sir Eyre Coote in India, they had proffered a request that his ribbon of the Order of the Bath should go to a friend, and believed that they had secured the granted assent of the Sovereign. The aspirant therefore appeared at the next levée at St. James's Palace with the officers of the Order; but the King, affecting great surprise at the unseemly haste of his ministers in acting on unofficial information, refused to confer the ribbon, repulsed their entreaties, and postponed the ceremony.[1]

George was now to taste the sweets of revenge in a matter more than ceremonial. His coadjutor was Earl Temple, who had advised him to wait until the times were ripe; and from a MS. preserved at Chevening we learn that the King hastily sent for the Earl on the night of 11th December. Thurlow also had an interview with him and pointed out in unmeasured terms the humiliations which he would suffer from Fox's India Bill, namely, that it would transfer to the present Ministers "more than half the royal power." Always jealous of his patronage, the King at once determined to ward off so insidious an attack. But he and his advisers acted with characteristic caution. They considered

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[1] Wraxall, iii, 150.

—and this is an interesting point in our constitutional history—that the exercise of the royal veto on the Bill, if it should pass both Houses, would be a "violent" step.[1] They preferred to act secretly and indirectly through the Lords.

In order to exert pressure in the most drastic way possible, a card was written (probably in the King's hand) stating "That His Majesty allowed Earl Temple to say that whoever voted for the India Bill was not only not his friend, but would be considered by him as an enemy; and if these words were not strong enough, Earl Temple might use whatever words he might deem stronger and more to the purpose."[2] Armed with this card, Temple set to work to whittle down the Fox-North majority. His success was startling and complete. The golden glint of the spoils of the Indies paled under the thunder-cloud of the royal displeasure. The fear of losing all chance of advancement at home, whether titular or material, sent place-hunters and trimmers trooping over to the Opposition; and a measure, the success of which seemed assured, was thrown out on 17th December by a majority of nineteen. On the next day the King ordered Lord North and Fox to send in their Seals of office by their Under-Secretaries, "as a personal interview on the occasion would be disagreeable to him." He entrusted the Seals at once to Temple, who on the day following signified to the other Ministers their dismissal from office. On the same day, 19th December, the King sent for Pitt and appointed him First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Thus it was that Pitt became Prime Minister before he attained his twenty-fifth year. His acceptance of office after the recent use of the royal prerogative is an action that stands in need of defence. There can be no doubt that George III abused his power by seeking in an underhand way to influence the votes of the Peers. The assertion of Earl Stanhope that his action did not involve the infraction of any specific rule of the constitution will not pass muster. As was ably pointed out in the debate in the Commons on 17th December, the three parts of the constitution, King, Lords, and Commons, exist independently; and, just as the interference of one branch of the Legislature in the debates and actions of the other is most properly resented, so too the intervention of the Crown during the debates is undoubtedly an infraction of the liberties of Parliament. While not forbidden by any specific rule of the constitution, such action contravenes the spirit of the ninth clause of the Bill of Rights, which stipulates for complete freedom of debate and speech in Parliament.

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[1] "Buckingham P.," i, 289.

[2] *Ibid.*, 285.

The attitude of Pitt towards this question during the debate of 17th December in the Commons is noteworthy. He did not attempt to defend such a use of the royal prerogative as was then first reported: he asserted, no doubt with perfect sincerity, that the report was an idle rumour, of which the House could take no cognizance. The House did not share his opinion. Swayed by a vehement speech of Fox, who declaimed against the "infernal spirit of intrigue" ever present in the King's counsels, and charged Pitt with an underhand attempt to gain power, members decided by a majority of nearly two to one that to report the opinion, or pretended opinion, of the King on any Bill under discussion in Parliament, was a high crime and misdemeanour, subversive of the constitution.[1]

It was in face of these resolutions that Pitt, on 19th December, took office. If he looked solely to Parliament, his position was hopeless. Confronting him was a hostile majority, smarting under a great disappointment, and threatening him, and still more his relative, Earl Temple, with the penalties of the constitution. On hearing the news of his acceptance of office, the members of the Coalition burst into loud laughter, and gleefully trooped over to the Opposition benches. Scarcely could they conceal their mirth during the ensuing debates; and on 22nd December the House resolved itself into a Committee to consider the state of the nation. Certainly Pitt's position was trying enough; for his triumph seemed to be the result of a backstairs intrigue, unworthy of the son of Chatham, and fatal to the influence of Parliament. He figured as the King's Minister, carried to office by the votes of nineteen Peers, against the will of the Commons. One can therefore understand the persistence of the Whig tradition, in which his action appeared the great betrayal of the liberties of Parliament.

Nevertheless, if we carry the question to the highest Court of Appeal, the action of Pitt is justifiable. The prerogatives of

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiv, 196-225.

Parliament are subservient to the interests of the nation. And when the majority of the House of Commons acts in a way strongly reprobated by public opinion, its authority undergoes an immediate eclipse. In a not dissimilar case, Chatham dared to appeal from a discredited House to the people at large; and his son was justified in taking a step which involved a reference to the people's will at the first favourable opportunity. Pitt always looked on the Coalition as an unprincipled intrigue, in which the forms of the constitution were used in order to violate its spirit. He knew that the country condemned what Romilly termed "that scandalous alliance." The original crime of the Coalition seemed more than ever heinous when Ministers appointed solely their own nominees to regulate Indian affairs. This very fact damned the India Bill in the eyes of the public, which cared not a jot for parliamentary majorities held together by hopes of booty. Men who had formerly inveighed against George III now began to revise their judgements and to pronounce even his last device justifiable when directed against Ministers who were about to perpetrate the most gigantic job of the century. In looking away from the votes of a corrupt Parliament to the will of the nation, Pitt was but following in the footsteps of his father, who had more than once made a similar appeal, and never in vain.

Finally we must remember that Pitt did not take office as a "King's Friend." He had consistently refused to bind himself down to the conditions which George III sought to impose. The King knew full well that he had to deal with a man of sternly independent nature. He had failed to bend Pitt's will in the summer, when conditions favoured his own "cause." Now, when he was accused of violating the constitution, and a hostile majority in the Commons held most threatening language, he could not but uphold a Minister who stood forth in his defence. If in July Pitt refused to bow before the royal behests, surely he might expect to dictate his own terms in December. The King's difficulty was Pitt's opportunity; and, as events were to prove, George III had, at least for a time, to give up his attempts at personal rule and to acquiesce in the rule of a Prime Minister who gave unity and strength to the administration. While freeing himself from the loathed yoke of the Whig oligarchy, the King unwittingly accepted the control of a man who personified the nation.

The importance of the events of 17th-22nd December 1783 can scarcely be overrated. In a personal sense they exerted an incalculable influence on the fortunes of George III, Pitt, Fox, Burke, and many lesser men. In constitutional history, as will afterwards appear, they brought about the development of the Cabinet and the reconstruction of the two chief political parties in their modern forms. The happy ending of the crisis enabled the ship of State to reach smoother waters and make harbour, though many of her crew and all foreign beholders looked on her as wellnigh a castaway. All this, and more, depended on Pitt's action in those days. He knew the serious nature of the emergency; and at such a time it behoves the one able steersman to take the helm, regardless of all cries as to his youth and his forwardness. Pitt had the proud confidence of Chatham, that he and he alone could save the kingdom, and the verdict of mankind has applauded the resolve of the father in the crisis of 1756, and the determination of his youthful son in the equally dark days at the close of 1783. Conduct, which in a weak and pliable man would have been a crime, is one of the many titles to fame of William Pitt the Younger.

CHAPTER VII

THE STRUGGLE WITH FOX

Let me lament,
With tears as sovereign as the blood of hearts,
That thou, my brother, my competitor
In top of all design, my mate in empire,
Friend and companion in the front of war,
The arm of mine own body, and the heart
Where mine his thoughts did kindle—that our stars,
Unreconciliable, should divide
Our equalness to this.

SHAKESPEARE, *Antony and Cleopatra.*

THE first difficulty which confronted the young Prime Minister was of a personal nature. On or about 23rd December, his cousin, Earl Temple, threw up the Seals and forthwith retired to his domain of Stowe in Buckinghamshire. This event seemed to presage the death of the infant administration, which the action of the Earl had largely helped to call to being. So assured was Fox of victory that he ascribed Temple's resignation to cowardice, and expressed regret at it because the inevitable fall of the new Ministry would be explained away by the action of the Earl.[1] Undoubtedly it was a severe blow to Pitt. Bishop Tomline states that, on visiting him early on the next morning, he found he had not had a moment's sleep, an occurrence without parallel in time of health.[2] For Pitt, like Napoleon, Wellington, and other hard workers, enjoyed the priceless boon of sound and restful slumber.

The reasons for Temple's retirement cannot fully be fathomed owing to the loss of his letters in these important weeks; but we know from the Buckingham Papers that he was disgusted with political life and had claimed the award of some honour as a sign of the King's approval of his services in Ireland, after his abrupt dismissal by Fox and North. The proud and sensitive nobleman doubtless entered into the plan for the overthrow of those enemies, in the hope of benefiting the State and setting the crown on his own career. Rumour had already assigned to him the Dukedom of Buckingham, and in this case that lying jade truthfully voiced his desires.[1]

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[1] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 224.

[2] Tomline (i, 233) gives the date as 21st December. The date is doubtful, in view of the two perfectly friendly letters of Pitt to his uncle on 23rd December, quoted by Stanhope ("Miscellanies," ii, 36, 37). Wilberforce places the Earl's resignation on 22nd December. I incline to place it late on the 23rd.

The prominent part which he had played in the late intrigue doubtless led him to insist on some high honour. As to the nature of the claim and its reception by Pitt we know nothing; for he loyally maintained silence as to the cause of the rupture; but the Earl's letter of 29th December to Pitt breathes suppressed resentment in every line. It is the peevish outpouring of a disappointed man, who saw his *protégés* in Ireland neglected, and his own wishes slighted.[2]

The question arises—why did not Pitt press the claims of his cousin? His services in Ireland had been valuable; and to him the Prime Minister very largely owed his present position. The answer would seem to be that Pitt soon found out the truth as to his objectionable use of the King's name. At first he rejected the rumour to that effect, and it is consonant with his character to suppose that, after probing the matter to the bottom, he declined to press on the King Earl Temple's claims. The rupture was sharp and sudden. It is even possible that high words passed between them. In any case, it is certain that Pitt did not raise the question of a reward for the Earl's services until ten months later. Good taste may also have determined his conduct in this matter. How could he at once confer a high dignity on the very man whose politic whisperings had helped to raise him to power? Time must elapse before Temple could gain the reward for his services in Ireland; and it was not until early in October 1784 that Pitt mooted the question of the Marquisate of Buckingham or the Order of the Garter.[3] The following new letter from Pitt to his cousin, preserved in the Chevening archives, contains the official notification of the former of these honours.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 163, 526-9. The Earl did not gain his desire, and deeply resented the refusal of George III to make him a duke.

[2] Quoted in full in "Buckingham P.," i, 291-3.

[3] "Dropmore P.," i, 239, 240.

Downing St.
Nov. 23, 1784.

MY DEAR LORD,

Your Lordship will receive from Lord Sydney the official notification of His Majesty's having given orders for preparing a Patent giving your Lordship the rank of Marquis. In addition to this mark of His Majesty's favour, I have great satisfaction in being authorized to assure your Lordship that, if His Majesty should depart from His present determination, of not giving the rank of Duke out of His Royal Family, it is His gracious intention to include your Lordship in any such promotion. I need not add how happy I am in obeying H. M.'s commands on this occasion, nor how truly I am at all times,

My dear Lord,
Your most affectionate and faithful servant,
W. PITT.

Turning from this personal matter, which brought friction for a time between the Pitt and Grenville families, we notice other difficulties confronting the young Premier, which might have daunted an experienced statesman. The frivolous looked on with amusement at his efforts.—"Well, Mr. Pitt may do what he likes during the holidays; but it will only be a mince-pie administration, depend upon it." So spake that truest of true blues, Mrs. Crewe, to Wilberforce on 22nd December; and she voiced the general opinion. Yet Pitt never faltered. On the next day Wilberforce noted in his journal: "Pitt nobly firm. Evening [at] Pitt's. Cabinet formed." On one topic alone did the young chief show any anxiety. "What am I to do," he asked, "if they stop the supplies?" "They will not stop them," replied his brother-in-law, Lord Mahon, "it is the very thing they will not venture to do."[1] The surmise of this vivacious young nobleman (afterwards Earl Stanhope) was for a time correct; but Pitt had rightly foreseen the chief difficulty in his path. For the present, on the receipt of a message from the King that no dissolution or prorogation would take place, Parliament separated quietly for the vacation (26th December).

For Pitt that Christmastide brought little but disappointment and anxiety. His cares were not lessened by the conduct which he found it desirable to pursue towards the Earl of Shelburne, long the official leader of the Chathamites. He did not include him in his Ministry, partly, perhaps, from a feeling of delicacy at asking his former chief to serve under him, but mainly from a conviction that his unpopularity would needlessly burden the labouring ship of State. To Orde he expressed his deep obligations to the Earl, but lamented his inability to leave out of count "the absolute influence of prejudice" against him. He did not even consult Shelburne as to the choice of coadjutors; and the Earl let it be known that he would have no connection with the new men, "lest he should injure them."[1] Pitt also sustained several direct rebuffs. Though, on 19th December, he sent an obsequious request to the Duke of Grafton to strengthen his hands by accepting the Privy Seal, that nobleman declined.[2] Camden was equally coy; and, strangest of all, his own brother-in-law, Mahon, would not come forward. We can detect a note of anxiety in the following letter of Pitt to Lord Sackville, formerly Germain, which I have discovered in the Pitt Papers (No. 102):

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 48.

Dec. 29, 1783.

MY LORD,

In the arduous situation in which His Majesty has condescended to command my services at this important juncture, I am necessarily anxious to obtain the honor of a support and assistance so important as your Lordship's. I flatter myself Mr. Herbert will have had the goodness to express my sense of the honor your Lordship did me by your obliging expressions towards me. Permit me to add how much mortification I received in being disappointed of his assistance at the Board of the Admiralty, which I took the liberty of proposing to him, in consequence of the conversation Lord Temple had had with your Lordship. I should sincerely lament if any change of arrangements produced by Lord Temple's resignation should deprive the King and country in any degree of a support which the present crisis renders so highly material to both. If your Lordship would still allow us to hope that you might be induced to mark by Mr. Herbert's acceptance your disposition in favour of the King's Government, the opening may be made with the greatest ease at any moment, and Your Lordship's commands on the subject would give me particular satisfaction.

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[1] Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne," iii, 406-13. Pitt soothed the feelings of the Earl by persuading the King to create him Marquis of Lansdowne. (*Ibid.*, 419-25).

[2] Grafton MSS. in the Chevening Library.

From Wraxall's Memoirs[1] we learn that the writer undertook to pave the way for the receipt of Pitt's letter; but all was in vain. Lord Sackville refused to take office, though he promised a general support.

The most serious refusal was that of the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland by Earl Cornwallis. George III highly approved of Pitt's proposal of that nobleman, whose tact and forbearance would have proved of infinite service in so troublous a time.[2] Who knows whether the rebellion and savage reprisals of 1798 might not have been averted by the adoption of wiser methods at Dublin Castle in the eighties? As it was, the most difficult administrative duty in the Empire was soon to devolve upon a young nobleman, the Duke of Rutland, whose chief qualifications seem to have been his showy parts, his splendid hospitality, and his early patronage of Pitt.

The Cabinet as finally formed comprised the following seven members: Pitt, First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer; the Marquis of Carmarthen (son of the Duke of Leeds), an amiable but unenterprising Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Lord Sydney (T. Townshend), Home Secretary; Earl Gower, President of the Council (up to December 1784, when Earl Camden succeeded him); the Duke of Rutland, Lord Privy Seal (up to November 1784, when Earl Gower succeeded him, the Duke taking the Viceroyalty of Ireland); Lord Howe, First Lord of the Admiralty; Lord Thurlow, Lord Chancellor. In debating power this Cabinet was deficient. Apart from Pitt and Thurlow, not one of the Ministers could make a tolerable speech, or possessed the strength of character which makes up for oratorical deficiencies.

Thurlow might have been a tower of strength in the Lords, but for his duplicity, bad temper, and domineering ways. For the present, Pitt had to put up with him as a disagreeable necessity. There was something so threatening in his aspect as to elicit Thelwall's picturesque description of him as a man with the Norman Conquest in his eyebrow and the Feudal System in every feature of his face. Add to these formidable gifts a sonorous voice, his powers of crushing retort, above all, his secret connection with George III, and his influence in the Upper House can be imagined. Yet his reputation rested on a slight basis; his knowledge of law was narrow, his culture slight, and his private character contemptible. He was known to bully his mistress and his illegitimate daughters, just as he browbeat juries and Whigs.[1] On the whole his reputation is hard to explain save on the ground that the majority of mankind is apt to be imposed on by externals, and is too uncritical or too lazy to sound the depths of character.

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[1] Wraxall, iii, 252.

[2] The letter of George III to Pitt, quoted in "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies," rebuts the statement of the editor of "The Cornwallis Correspondence" (i, 162, *n.*) that there is no trace of any offer of an office to Cornwallis. The letters of the Earl at that time show that he declined office because he believed Pitt's administration must speedily fall, whereupon "the virtuous Coalition" would return in triumph.

For the present Pitt tolerated Thurlow just as the commander of an untried warship might tolerate the presence of an imposing gun of uncertain power, in the midst of light weapons. The boom of his voice was worth something to a Ministry in which the posts not of Cabinet rank were filled as follows: The Duke of Richmond, Master-General of the Ordnance;[2] Kenyon, Attorney-General; Pepper Arden, Solicitor-General; William Grenville (afterwards Lord Grenville) and Lord Mulgrave, joint Paymasters of the Forces; Henry Dundas (afterwards Lord Melville), Treasurer of the Navy; Sir George Yonge, Secretary at War; George Rose and Thomas Steele, Secretaries of the Treasury; Thomas Orde, Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Of these the Duke of Richmond had great private influence, but was personally unpopular. Grenville and Rose were useful, hard-working men, but uninteresting in personality and speech. Their characters and that of Dundas will concern us in Chapter XII. Here we may note that the bold and jovial nature of Dundas made him popular as a man; but his defection from Lord North, and his capacity for intrigue impaired his influence in the House. Nevertheless his fighting powers, his legal training, his knowledge of men and affairs, and his skill in parrying the blows of the Opposition made him an effective lieutenant in the House. By degrees, as we shall see, he acquired great influence over Pitt; and after his entry to the Cabinet as Home Secretary in 1791, he, together with Grenville, came to form around Pitt what may almost be termed an inner Cabinet. For the present, however, the distrust with which the "Caledonian thane" was regarded permitted him to be no more than the chief among Pitt's subordinates; and the ingenious poetaster of the "Rolliad" maliciously aimed these lines at his weakest point, his inconsistency:

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[1] "Mems. of the Whig Party," ii, 5-7.

[2] The Duke of Richmond did not join the Cabinet until 13th January. See Lord Carmarthen's Mem. ("Leeds Mem.," 94).

> His ready tongue with sophistries at will
> Can say, unsay, and be consistent still;
> This day can censure, and the next retract,
> In speech extol, and stigmatize in act.

The other subordinates claim only the briefest notice. Sir George Yonge was a nonentity, under whom the British army sank to the nadir of efficiency. Kenyon and Pepper Arden were very young men; the latter was one of Pitt's Cambridge friends, lively and amiable, but having little influence in debate. The House could not take Pepper seriously. On the whole the Ministry aroused little confidence among friends and much derision among opponents. The general opinion was expressed by Sir Gilbert Elliot (first Earl of Minto) that Pitt's colleagues were "a set of children playing at Ministers, and must be sent back to school, and in a few days all will have returned to its former course."[1] On the other hand Daniel Pulteney, writing to the Duke of Rutland, said that people approved the appointments and were glad that Pitt, in showing attention to existing interests, proved himself to be not "too virtuous and speculative for a Minister."[2]

Such were the predictions concerning a premiership which was to last nearly eighteen years. In one respect the mediocrity of his colleagues made Pitt's task easier. His commanding temper would never have brooked the superior airs of the earls, Temple and Shelburne. From the outset he could carry out his plan of moulding the Cabinet to his will and enforcing its discipline, without hindrance except from Thurlow; and the final ejection of that cross-grained egoist marked not only the triumph of Pitt, but also the consolidation of the Cabinet in what seems to be its permanent form, a body moulded by, and largely responsible to, the Prime Minister.

All this was hidden from the gaze of the most discerning amidst the gloom and uncertainties of the first days of the year 1784. Shortly before Parliament re-assembled events occurred which helped to strengthen a confessedly weak administration. At the request of Pitt, George III created four new peerages. Thomas Pitt received the title of Lord Camelford; Edward Eliot (father of Pitt's brother-in-law) became Lord Eliot; Henry Thynne was created Lord Carteret; and a barony was conferred on the second son of the Duke of Northumberland. Thus the sources of nobility, which had remained hermetically sealed during the previous administration, were now opened with a highly suggestive readiness.

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[1] "Life and Letters of Sir G. Elliot," i, 91.

[2] "Rutland P.," iii, 73.

Another incident, which it is more pleasing to relate, concerned Pitt alone. On 11th January the Clerkship of the Pells, a sinecure worth £3,000 a year for life, fell vacant by the death of Sir Edward Walpole, a younger son of the Whig statesman. According to precedent, it would have been not only justifiable, but usual for Pitt to take this post. Despite the advice of his friends to this effect, Pitt refused to increase his very slender private income at the public expense, and prevailed on Colonel Barré to accept the sinecure in place of the pension of £3,200 a year generously voted to him by the economical Rockingham. This most unexpected conduct, which of course saved the public funds the amount of that pension, was loudly praised by Barré himself and by all who were not inveterate partisans. These last decried Pitt's action as resulting either from love of applause or from priggishness. The taunt has been echoed in later times, even by those who laud to the skies Chatham's self-abnegation in the matter of official perquisites. Nothing better illustrates the malice which has dogged the footsteps of the son than that sneers should be his reward for an action similar in all respects to that which has elicited praise for his father. Both of them, surely, desired at the outset to emphasize their resolve to put down financial jobbery in the public service. Their actions were prompted solely by patriotism.

On 12th January, when Parliament met, Pitt had to bear the brunt of reiterated attacks from Fox, Erskine, and General Conway, under cover of motions for resuming a Committee to consider the state of the nation. The young Minister parried their blows by stating his resolve to bring in very soon an India Bill. Then, flinging back their taunts, that he had crept into office by the backstairs, he uttered these memorable words: "The integrity of my own heart and the probity of the public, as well as my private principles, shall always be my sources of action. I will never condescend to be the instrument of any secret advisers whatever; nor in any one instance, while I have the honour to act as Minister of the Crown in this House, will I be responsible for measures not my own, or at least in which my heart and judgement do not cordially acquiesce." The glance of contempt which he flung at Lord North (the unwilling tool of George III in the American War) gave point to this declaration. In truth, it sounded the keynote of Pitt's career. He came into office to save the country from the Coalition, but he came in untrammelled by royal control; and his action in resigning in 1801 evinced the proud consistency of his convictions.

Beaten in the first division in the House of Commons by a majority of thirty-nine, and on the next day by even larger numbers, he held on his way unmoved.[1] In consonance with the traditions of Chatham, he cared little for Parliament provided that the country was with him; and of this there were unmistakable proofs. The East India Company, acting through a sub-committee which sat permanently for the defence of its interests, was arousing all the chartered bodies of the land against a policy that seemed to threaten other vested interests. "Our property and charter are forcibly invaded: look to your own." This was the battle-cry, unscrupulous but effective, which made aldermen, freemen, wardens, and liverymen of venerable companies bestir themselves. A little later the City of London sent an address of thanks to the King for his action in saving the country from the evils of Fox's India Bill.

Thus Pitt, wafted onwards by the breath of popular favour, could confidently expose his India Bill to the contrary gusts that eddied in the House of Commons (14th January 1784). The methods used in its preparation were in signal contrast to those employed by Fox. The Whig leader, far from consulting the East India Company, had drawn up his Bill in concert with Burke and others hostile to its interests and ill-informed as to its working. Pitt, on the contrary, took care to find out the views entertained in Leadenhall Street. The Pitt Papers show that the

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[1] Lord Carmarthen stated that in the Cabinet meeting of 13th January Pitt talked of giving up the struggle, but this is against all other contemporary evidence ("Leeds Mems.," 94). These notes on the Cabinet meetings show how long were the discussions there respecting a dissolution, and Pitt's anxiety to defer it to a favourable moment.

Company manifested a desire to meet him more than half way, and that their representative officials conferred with him on 5th January 1784. Indeed, his Bill was in large measure the outcome of resolutions which seem to have been framed at that conference and which gained the assent of five-sixths of those present at a General Court of the Company held on 10th January. The resolutions were to this effect:—That the Company, confiding in the justice of Government for the relief of some of its most pressing claims, consented that the following powers should be vested in the Crown: (1) All despatches to or from India to be communicated to one of the King's Ministers, and the Directors must conform to the King's pleasure. The controlling power to be vested in the Minister and other responsible persons delegated to attend to the affairs of the Company. (2) Despatches relating to commercial affairs must likewise be submitted to the Minister, who may negative them if they bear on civil or military Government, or on the revenues of the Company. In case of dispute, the decision of His Majesty in Council shall be final. (3) The General Court of the Company shall be restrained from rescinding any act of the Court of Directors only after the King's pleasure shall have been signified on the same. (4) The Government in India to be carried on in the name of the Company by a Governor and three councillors in each of the Presidencies, the Governor and the Commander-in-Chief (who shall be next in Council to the Governor) being appointed and recalled by the Crown, while the Company appointed the two other councillors, subject to His Majesty's approbation. They could be recalled either by the Crown or by the Company.[1]

When the Company agreed to sacrifice so much of its powers, the battle was half won; but, for the present, the chief difficulty lay in the House of Commons. In introducing his India Bill on 14th January, Pitt sought to forestall the criticisms of the hostile majority by reminding the House that the government of territories so remote and so different from our own must be in a sense irrational—"inconvenient to the mother and supreme power, oppressive and inadequate to the necessities of the governed." In such a case any scheme of government must be a choice between inconveniences. He then stated the principles on which he based his proposals. Firstly, the Indian dominion must not be in the hands of the Company of merchants in Leadenhall Street. Nevertheless, any change should be made not violently, but with the concurrence of that Company, its commercial affairs being left as far as possible to its supervision, wherever they were not mixed up with questions of policy and revenue. Where these questions were involved, obviously Government must have a voice.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 353. I cannot accept Mr. Sichel's statement ("Sheridan," ii, 45), that Dundas prescribed Pitt's India Bill, and Burke helped in it. Dundas doubtless helped in its compilation, but Pitt must have conferred directly with the Company and found out how far it was inclined to meet his views.

Having laid down these guiding principles, he proceeded to fill in details. He claimed that his proposals were such as not to interfere arbitrarily with the privileges of the Company; and that his new Board of Control would be found to be, not the organ of a party, but an adjunct of the governmental machinery. It was to consist of at least two of the Ministers of the Crown, namely, the Secretary for Home Affairs and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, along with a certain number of Privy Councillors named by the King. These last were to attend regularly, and were not to be paid. All the despatches of the Company, except those of a completely commercial nature, were to be submitted to the new India Board and countersigned by it. While not controlling the patronage of the Company, the Board would have the right to negative their chief appointments. The three Presidencies were henceforth to be administered, each by a Governor (a Governor-General in the case of Bengal), a Commander-in-Chief, and a Council. The Crown would appoint these three Commanders-in-Chief, and would have the right of recalling the Governors and their councillors—a clause calculated to prevent such a fiasco as that of the attempted recall of Warren Hastings. Finally, in order to curb the abuses in the Company's service, Pitt proposed to institute at Westminster a tribunal for the trial of offences committed in India, and he suggested that parts of the second India Bill of Fox might be adopted for the prevention of abuses in India.

There can be no doubt that this measure excelled that of Fox in many respects. It left the actual details of administration to Governors and councillors who were on the spot and could act therefore with promptitude; but, by subjecting them in all matters other than commercial to what was in effect a special committee of the Privy Council, it associated the Government of India with the British constitution in a way that answered the needs of the time and the developments of the future.

But the House of Commons was in no mood to gauge the excellences of the scheme. It was swayed rather by the vehement criticisms of Fox, who declared that the Bill gave far too much influence to the Crown, and that, if passed, it must inevitably lead to the loss of India. The Fox-North Coalition still voted solidly for their chiefs, and on 23rd January the measure was thrown out on the second reading by 222 votes to 214.

Scenes of great excitement ensued. Fox and his followers loudly called on the Ministry to resign. Pitt sat still, vouchsafing no reply to the clamour, except when General Conway accused him of sending agents over the land to corrupt the voters. Then he started to his feet, defying Conway to substantiate the charge, but, for the rest, declaring his indifference to the slanders of opponents, and his determination to work for the welfare of the State.

Three days later, when Fox charged him with acting as the unconstitutional Minister of the Crown and overriding the powers of Parliament, he replied that such was not his act and intention. His conduct was unusual because the occasion was unprecedented. To have resigned after the recent vote would have brought to power Ministers who, he believed, had not the confidence of the nation; and he further pointed to the recent diminution of the votes of the Opposition. The argument was telling, for the hostile majority had dwindled from one hundred and six on 3rd December, to thirty-nine on 12th January, and now to eight. These facts clinched his contention that the feeling of the House was inclining to the favourable verdict which the country had begun to declare. A shrewd observer like Wraxall came to see that Pitt was vindicating the constitution even in his seeming breach of it.[1]

Nevertheless, everything was at hazard. Though the majority against him lessened, it was still a clear majority; and to appeal from an indisputable fact to what was at most a surmise, seemed a defiance of the House. As such it met with severe handling at the hands of Fox and his sturdy henchman, Coke of Norfolk. They, however, finally agreed to adjourn the whole question for three days. Why Fox did not at once press his advantage to the utmost is hard to say. Perhaps he feared to let loose the passions of the House upon the country at large when Consols were down at 54 and national ruin seemed imminent. He may have desired to gain time in order to watch the trend of public opinion, and to appear as a peace-restoring Neptune rather than an inconsiderate Aeolus.

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[1] Wraxall, iii, 85.

An influential minority of the House longed for calm. On that very day fifty-three of its members met privately at the St. Albans Tavern to urge a union of parties on a more natural and less unpopular basis than the Fox-North Coalition. Appointing a committee of five, they besought the Duke of Portland to use his influence to bring about a connection between Fox and Pitt. As we have seen, the hostility of these statesmen had arisen, not from difference of principles, but from the divergent interests of party groups. It had, however, been inflamed by Pitt's acceptance of office in circumstances that were especially odious to Fox; and the Whig leader, in his speech of 26th January, pointedly declared that, while admitting the urgent need of union and conciliation, he must insist on the vindication of the honour of the House by the resignation of the present unconstitutional Ministry. A similar declaration was sent on the same day by the Duke of Portland to the committee of the St. Albans Tavern meeting.

Such a beginning was far from promising. Clearly an understanding existed between the nominal and real chiefs of the Whig party with a view to forcing on a dissolution. This implied that the conciliators were appealing to party-leaders to act as arbiters, and that they at once passed judgement against the Pitt Ministry. Matters were not improved during a debate in the House on the need of forming an extended Administration (2nd February). Fox, while disclaiming any personal hostility to Pitt, insisted on the resignation of Ministers as the first step towards the formation of a wider Administration. On his side Pitt once more declared that any union between them must be formed in an honourable way, and that it would be paltry for him to resign merely in order to treat for re-admission to office. The original motion having passed unanimously, a hostile resolution was then brought forward substantiating Fox's declaration. Whereupon Pitt, nettled by these insidious tactics, declared that he would never change his armour and beg to be received as a volunteer among the forces of the enemy. Never, he exclaimed, would he consent to resign before the terms of such a union were arranged. If the House desired to drive the Ministry from office there were two ways open—either to petition the King for their removal, or to impeach them. At present their remaining in office was not unconstitutional. The hostile motion, however, passed by a majority of nineteen; and by a slightly larger majority the House resolved to lay its decision before the King.

That day was perhaps the most critical of Pitt's parliamentary career. The feeling of the House seemed to be turning against him; and the negotiations at the St. Albans Tavern (which went on intermittently until 1st March) were far from favourable to his interests. Both sides agreed as to the goal to be reached, but each threw on the other the responsibility of taking the first step, which that other declined on points of honour. At the outset the Duke of Portland declined to see Pitt with respect to a union until he had resigned. Then, on 31st January, he hinted, obscurely enough, that the Minister might find a middle way; and when Pitt requested an explanation, he referred him to recent precedents, which were in effect resignations.

The good sense which rarely deserts the House of Commons for long reappeared on 11th February. Fox then professed not only his readiness to serve with Pitt, when he had complied with the terms of the constitution, but also his desire to meet him half-way as to the details of a new India Bill of which he had given notice. Pitt replied in a similar spirit, but declared that there were some men with whom he could not serve. Thereupon Lord North, at whom this shaft was levelled, declared his willingness to stand aside if the voice of the country demanded it. No act in his career did him more credit, and the incident aroused a general hope that Pitt would now feel himself able with honour to resign.

He refused, however, to take that step, probably because of the continued obduracy of the Duke of Portland. The St. Albans Tavern Committee had besought the King to intervene in order to facilitate an interview between Pitt and the Duke. Accordingly on Sunday, 16th February, the King rather reluctantly urged the Duke to meet the Prime Minister, but signified privately to Pitt his resolve never to apply to His Grace again if he still declined.[1] Nevertheless the Duke refused to unbend.

The last stage of the negotiations illustrates the niggling methods of partisanship prevalent in those times. In answer to a final appeal from the committee, Pitt and his colleagues urged the King to make one more effort to bring the Duke of Portland to an accommodation. The reply of the King on 26th February shows that, in spite of his strong objections, he made that effort, but with the stipulation that the Duke should have "no right to anything above an equal share to others in the new administration, not to be the head of it, whatever employment he may hold." Pitt amplified this statement by declaring that the new Ministry would be formed "on a wide basis, and on fair and equal terms." Obviously this implied the entry of the followers of Portland and Fox on equal terms with those of Pitt; but the Duke, while approving the word "fair," required to know the meaning of the word "equal"; and when Pitt replied that this could be best explained in their interview, the Duke refused to come unless the meaning of the word were first made clear.[1] This straining at gnats put an end to the negotiations. It is now abundantly clear that Pitt went as far as could be expected, and that the continuation of the deadlock resulted from the captiousness of the Duke of Portland.

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[1] Stanhope, i, App., p. viii.

Ten years were to elapse before the Portland Whigs came in to strengthen Pitt's hands, and their accession amid the storms of the French Revolution involved the break up of the Whig party. In February 1784 there was a chance that the whole party would form a working alliance with Pitt and the Chathamites. Such a union would have formed a phalanx strong enough to renovate the life of Great Britain and to prepare her better to stand the strain of the coming crises. It was not to be. Obviously no union could be lasting where the party knocking for admission insisted on dictating its terms and gaining admission to the citadel.

There is, indeed, an air of unreality about these negotiations, probably due to the fact that each party was intent on the state of public opinion and the chances of a dissolution. The same fact probably explains the action of Fox in the House. Time after time he carried motions of censure against Pitt, though by wavering majorities. He and his followers hindered the apportionment of the supplies, threatened to block the annual Mutiny Bill, and went so far as to hold the menace of impeachment over the heads of Ministers. When the Lords by a large majority reprobated the actions of the Commons and begged the King to continue his Ministers in office, the intervention of the Upper House was strongly resented by the Coalition majority.[1]

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[1] "Ann. Reg." (1784-5), 271; "Memorials of Fox," ii, 238-41.

Yet Fox never pressed his attacks home. The threats of impeachment remained mere stage thunder, probably because he doubted his power to launch the bolt. There was, indeed, much truth in Pitt's description of him as "the champion of a small majority of this House against the loud and decided voice of this people." Hatred of the unnatural Coalition, far from declining, was intensified by Pitt's manly and consistent conduct. The popular imagination thrilled at the sight of the young Premier braving the clamour of Foxites and Northites in reliance upon the final verdict of the nation. According to all the constitutional text-books, the Whig leader spoke sound doctrine when he declaimed against Pitt's tenure of office in the teeth of the repeated censures of the House; but men discerned the weakness of the Opposition; they weighed it rather than counted heads; and in the balances of common sense the Fox-North majority kicked the beam. Westminster and Banbury, the very places which had returned Fox and North, now sent up addresses of thanks to the King for dismissing them from office. Middlesex, Edinburgh, York, Worcester, Exeter, and Southwark, besides many smaller places, sent in addresses to the same effect, thereby in some cases dishonouring the parliamentary drafts of their members. The City of London, the home of blatant Whiggism at the time of the Wilkes affair, now thanked Pitt for his services and voted him its freedom, with the accompaniment of a gold box. His ride into the city on 28th February to receive this honour resembled a royal progress, and Wilkes was the man who welcomed him to the Hall of the Grocers' Company, where he was entertained at a great banquet.

Nor was his popularity lessened by an incident that attended his return to his brother's residence in Berkeley Square. His carriage, drawn along by a cheering crowd, was passing the chief social centre of the Foxites, Brooks's Club, when a sudden rush was made at it by a body of stalwart ruffians armed with sticks and the broken poles of sedan-chairs. So fierce was the onset that the carriage doors crashed in, and Lord Chatham with difficulty parried the blows aimed at his brother. For some moments they were in serious danger, but, aided by their partisans, they succeeded in escaping to White's Club, hard by. Fox was loudly accused of being the author of this outrage. But, of course, it would be foolish to lay this brutal attack to his charge. It seems probable, however, that hangers-on of the party paid some scoundrels to incapacitate Pitt for the rest of the parliamentary strifes. He, and he alone, could make headway against the storm; and his removal even for a week would have led to the triumph of Fox and North. We may note here that Pitt did not resign his membership of Brooks's Club on account of this outrage—a proof that he was far above all thoughts of revenge or rancour.

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[1] Hearn, "The Government of England," 140-4, 147.

The prospects of the Opposition were somewhat marred by the events of 28th February. Everything tended to hamper the actions of that ill-assorted couple, North and Fox. True, on 1st March they carried by twelve votes an address to the King for the removal of Ministers; but George III acted not only with firmness but with dignity. He replied, as he had before replied to a similar address, that he deplored the failure of the efforts to form an extended Administration on *fair and equal terms*, but saw in that failure no reason for dismissing Ministers who appeared to have the confidence of the country, and against whom no specific charges were urged. These skilful retorts struck home; and a long and reproachful representation to the King, said to have been drawn up by Burke, was carried by a majority of only one. Pitt looked on this as tantamount to a triumph; for two days later he wrote to the Duke of Rutland that he was "tired to death even with victory; for I think our present state is entitled to that name."[1] His forecast was correct. In face of these dwindling numbers, Fox and North did not venture to oppose the passing of the Mutiny Bill, which, since the beginning of William III's reign, has year by year legalized the existence of a standing army.[2]

To allow this measure to pass, after threatening to obstruct the work of Government, was a virtual confession of failure; and not only the House but the country took it as such. The inner weakness of the Coalition now became daily more evident. Discontents that were hidden during the months of seeming triumph broke forth as the prospect of defeat loomed large ahead. The tension of the past two months now gave way to a strange slackness, resulting doubtless from the uncertainties of the situation. Fox relapsed into silence. Pitt rarely spoke and scarcely vouchsafed a reply to the smaller men who kept up the aimless strife. In truth, the heavy-laden air at St. Stephen's gave premonitory signs of that portent in nature when songsters become mute and animals creep about with anxious restlessness under the shadow of an oncoming eclipse.

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[1] "Corresp. between Pitt and the Duke of Rutland," 9. Cornwallis ("Corresp.," i, 171) also prophesied after that vote that if Ministers acted wisely, they might hold office for many years.

[2] "Leeds Mems.," 99

The nation was now to give its verdict. On 24th March the King dissolved Parliament. The Great Seal disappeared from the house of the Lord Chancellor on that very morning; but by great efforts another was ready by noon of the 25th. For some weeks the land had simmered with suspense. "Even ladies," wrote Horace Walpole on 12th March, "talk of nothing but politics." In truth, a time of new political fashions was at hand. The old having been discarded, very much depended on a decided lead given by some of the leading constituencies.

For various reasons men looked eagerly to the example set by Yorkshire and Westminster. Both had recently led the way in the agitation for Economic and Parliamentary Reform and were strongholds of Whiggism; yet both the county and the city had recently acclaimed the conduct of Pitt. Canon Mason, a well-known poet of those days, who, with the reforming parson, Wyvill, had fathered the Yorkshire Reform Association, was now working hard on behalf of George III and Pitt—a fact which spoke volumes. Yet, despite the strength of the Association, and the ardent Toryism of most of the clothing towns of the West Riding, the influence of the great Whig Houses, especially the Cavendishes in Wharfedale, the Fitzwilliams at Wentworth, and the Earl of Carlisle at Castle Howard, was so strong as to make the issue doubtful.

The feeling of the county was tested first at a great meeting of its freeholders held in the yard of the Castle at York on Lady Day. Despite driving hail-storms and a bitter wind, thousands of sturdy yeomen, together with throngs of clothiers from the towns of the West Riding, poured into that historic space. Then came the magnates of the county, driving up in their coaches-

and-six. In good old English style the two sides of the case were set forth on the hustings in fair and open rivalry by the best speakers of both parties. The large towns and the yeomen evidently favoured the royal prerogative upheld by Pitt, while the claims of the Whigs and of North's followers were championed by the great lords and their tenantry, by sticklers for constitutional precedents, and all who hoped to benefit by a change of Ministry. The issues at stake being as obscure as the cleavage between parties was zigzag, the speeches for the most part fell ineffectively. What with the sleet and the confusion of parties the meeting seemed about to break up in disorder, when there appeared on the daïs a figure so slim and weak as to quail before the blasts. But the first few sentences of that silvery voice penetrated the storm and dominated the swaying crowd. It was the voice of Wilberforce, who once more showed the influence of clearness of thought and beauty of utterance over a confused throng. Boswell, describing the whole incident to Dundas, said: "I saw what seemed a mere shrimp mount upon the table; but, as I listened he grew and grew until the shrimp became a whale."

The victory of mind over matter was decisive. His arraignment of the Coalition and defence of Pitt carried the meeting with him; and a great shout arose: "We'll have this man as our county member." The instinct of the meeting was sound. The tact of Wilberforce in uniting all Whigs and Tories who were not committed to the Coalition or bound by the magnates greatly furthered his cause; so that finally an election which had of late always been decided by the three great Houses named above, resulted in the triumphant return of Wilberforce and Duncombe. The show of hands was so overwhelmingly in their favour that the Whigs accepted the verdict and did not demand a poll. The victory was not only a severe blow to the county families and an assertion of the growing independence of the middle classes and yeomen; it was also a gain for the cause of purity, the total expenses of the successful candidates being less than £5,000.

The example set in Yorkshire was followed in most parts of Great Britain. The supporters of the Coalition were smitten hip and thigh; as many as 160 members of the Opposition were thrown out, and by a very obvious joke they were termed Fox's Martyrs, the details of their deaths being recorded with tragi-comic solemnity.[1] The strength and universality of the popular impulse surprised even Pitt.[2] He was carried in triumphantly by 334 votes for the University of Cambridge, his friend, Lord Euston, gaining 288, while their opponents, Townshend and Mansfield, polled only 267 and 181 respectively.[3] Wilkes swept Middlesex by a large majority—for the Crown. Skilful speakers like Erskine, county magnates like Earl Verney and Thomas Grenville, were thrust aside for the crime of supporting the Coalition; and in certain boroughs, where no one had been sent down to oppose that hated union, travellers who declaimed against it were forcibly detained and returned as members of Parliament. Never, we are assured by Wraxall, was there less bribery used in the interests of the Crown; for, as he naively asserts, "corruption for once became almost unnecessary."[4]

The reasons of this extraordinary overthrow of the Coalition are not far to seek. Tories felt far more regard for the royal prerogative than for Lord North, now that he had gone over to the King's enemies; and independent Whigs refused to follow Fox in his ex-centric march towards the Northites. Thus the Coalition was in reality defeated by—the Coalition. That jaundiced old Whig, Horace Walpole, might abjure his friendship with Mason for heading "the pert and ignorant cabal at York"; he might declare that the nation must be intoxicated to applaud the use of the royal prerogative against "the Palladium of the people" (the House of Commons). "Junius" might raise his once dreaded voice to assure his countrymen that the victory of Pitt would put an end to their boasted liberties. It was useless. The nation's instinct bade it break with the past and start afresh on a path that promised steady progress. That instinct now swept aside the old party lines and organizations in a way that had not been seen since the advent of the Georges.

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[1] "Fox's Martyrs: a new Book of the Sufferings of the Faithful" (London, 3rd edit., 1784).

[2] Letter to Wilberforce, 6th April 1784.

[3] I have found in the Pitt MSS. (No. 315) only two references to Pitt's election for Cambridge. One is a letter of that year from "F. B." giving numerous hints how this or that M.A. should be "got at" so as to secure his vote, and ending: "Go on and prosper, thou godlike young man, worthy of your immortal father." The other is a note, not dated, signed J. T[urner?]:

"DEAR PRETYMAN,

"Our canvas goes on very successfully, but we are yet very desirous of your being here to-morrow night if possible, since Mr. Pitt cannot come himself. His appearance on Thursday did immense service. . . . We depend on seeing you to-morrow; next to Mr. Pitt's appearance yours will certainly be of the utmost importance."

[4] Wraxall, iii, 338.

Only at one place was the rout of the Whigs stayed; and the doubtful issue of the conflict at Westminster attested the wondrous personal powers of Fox. A union of strength with geniality, of eloquence with frankness, which appeals to Englishmen, was seen in him in all its potency. The "magician" (to use Pitt's phrase about his rival) waved his wand with startling effect. A few days of platform speaking sufficed to restore his earlier popularity. Despite the utmost efforts of the Court and Government on behalf of their candidates, Admiral Hood and Sir Cecil Wray, the Whig totals crept up day by day, so as to threaten the seat of the latter, which at one time seemed assured.[1] George III followed the course of the Westminster election with an eager interest that reveals his hatred of the Whig leader. This is seen in his suggestion on 13th April to Pitt that bad votes should be fabricated at Westminster to counterbalance those which must have been trumped up for Fox; or again (1st May) that the *Quackers* [*sic*] might perhaps be induced to come to the poll in the interests of the Government.

All was of no avail. The arts of Windsor were foiled by the charms of Devonshire House. Georgiana, the beauteous duchess, used her allurements to rally voters to the Whig cause, and is said to have carried her complaisance so far as to kiss a butcher for a promise of his vote. Certain it is that she and her sister, the Viscountess Duncannon, conveyed artisans from the outlying districts to the poll in their own chariots. The Countesses of Carlisle and Derby, Lady Beauchamp, and Mrs. Crewe, also used their charms on behalf of the Whig cause, so that a favouring rhymester could write:

Sure Heaven approves of Fox's cause
(Though slaves at Court abhor him),
To vote for Fox, then, who can pause
Since *Angels* canvass for him?[2]

In vain did the Court put forward the Countess of Salisbury to keep waverers steadfast. The Countess possessed beauty, but tempered by age and discretion. Thanks to the exertions of Georgiana, and to the influence of the Prince of Wales and of the Dukes of Portland and Devonshire, Fox, at the end of an exciting contest of forty days, headed Sir Cecil Wray by 236 votes, though he still fell 460 votes below Lord Hood. The Prince of Wales celebrated this triumph by a great reception in the grounds of Carlton House at the very time when the King was passing outside to open Parliament.

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[1] For the daily figures see "Ann. Reg." (1784), 34.

[2] "Hist. of Westminster Election," 483.

But the local success of the Whigs was not yet complete. Many suspicious facts during the election seemed to discredit the result; and when Sir Cecil Wray demanded a scrutiny, the High Bailiff of Westminster not only granted the request, but refused to make any return for Westminster, thus invalidating the election of Fox and even of Hood until an inquiry was held.[1] Fox entered Parliament, but it was through the kindness and foresight of Sir Thomas Dundas, who had procured his election for the Orkney and Shetland Islands. At once he attacked the High Bailiff as well as the Government, which he accused of influencing the action of that official. The matter is too involved and technical to enter upon here. Its chief interest lies in the manly and massive oration which Fox flung against Pitt on 8th June. The Prime Minister evaded the missile with much dexterity; and a large majority insisted on the scrutiny. After nine months of inquiry the position of the candidates was virtually unchanged. The Government's following strongly desired to end this expensive and fruitless inquiry; but Pitt opposed the motions to this effect, and early in the session of 1785 found himself abandoned by his majority.

The motives which prompted his action on this affair will be considered in Chapter XII; but we may here note that it certainly lessened his personal influence in the critical session of 1785. His own position had hitherto been so well assured that generous behaviour towards one of the most affable and open-handed men of his time would have been both natural and becoming. As it was, many of his friends were disgusted, and some thought his conduct would fatally prejudice his future. Thus, on 10th February 1785 Daniel Pulteney wrote as follows: "Contrary to the wish of all his real friends, and only supported by Dundas, Lord Mulgrave, and Bearcroft, Pitt persevered in this cursed business. . . . The consequence of this will be trifling if Pitt will *now* recede and agree to order the return, but . . . many will form a very different idea of the Administration if such an odious business is forced down by a small majority."[1] Fortunately Pitt's own friends abandoned him before matters went too far. The affair unsteadied his followers for a time; and the impression was spread abroad that he had all the qualifications for winning a decisive victory, but none of the graces that add lustre to its laurels. Apart from this personal detail, which influenced public opinion more than far wider questions, Pitt's triumph in and after 1784 was so complete as to usher in a new era in British politics. We may therefore pause to review both its causes and its significance.

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[1] From the letter of George III to Pitt of 1st May it seems that the High Bailiff had previously decided to grant a scrutiny, if asked for, owing to the many doubtful votes that had been polled.

Besides the irremediable blunder committed by Fox in framing the Coalition with Lord North, he made several mistakes during the early weeks of 1784. It was in the highest degree unwise to stake everything on the cohesion of his majority in the Commons, and to seek to avert a dissolution. Judging by his motions in the House, it was the worst of crimes for Pitt to advise the King to appeal to the nation. But surely that was the natural and almost inevitable step, seeing that Parliament had sat for four years, and the opponents were very nearly matched. Yet, while hindering the course of public business by the postponement of votes for the public service, Fox claimed to be acting with a single eye to the public welfare. Such conduct evinced no insight into the essentials of the problem before him. For surely, if Ministers were acting as illegally as he averred, it was his duty to impeach them. If their offence was more venial, the verdict of the people would suffice. The question could be decided only in one of two ways—either by an impeachment or a dissolution. He decided in neither way, but allowed the tangle to grow worse, until men came to believe that his sole aims were to shirk any appeal, either to the laws of England or to the hustings, and to force his way once more to power along with Lord North by means of their large but unstable majority. This was the suspicion which thinned their following at St. Stephen's and ruined them at the polls.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 177.

Pitt, on the other hand, showed great tactical skill in working his way out from an apparently hopeless position. Admitting that his tenure of office was irregular, he justified it by the unanswerable retort that the Opposition could not govern. Accepting their decision, that supplies should be postponed so as to prevent a dissolution, he made it clear whose was the responsibility for the resulting disorganization. Finally, when the inability of his opponents to block the Mutiny Bill had set free the administrative machine, he appealed to the country. Men were quick to see which side had best consulted the interests of the State. Over against the impotently factious conduct of Fox stood the patriotic good sense of his rival in disregarding the wavering censures of a discredited House in order on the fitting occasion to consult the will of the nation.

So soon as the essential facts of that unparalleled situation are fully grasped, the diatribes against Pitt for making an illegal use of the royal prerogative for selfish purposes are seen to be mere verbiage. Equally futile is it to inquire, with Lord John Russell, why the constitution was not afterwards altered in favour of the Crown, and why the Court did not gain more advantage by its triumph in the General Election of 1784.[1] The fact is that Pitt had never intended to govern as a Court minion, or to subject the constitution to the royal will. It was not merely that his pride revolted against any such degradation; but his principles, no less than the tough consistency of his nature, forbade it. Because he insisted on maintaining the King's prerogative at one point, namely, that Ministers were dismissed by him and not by the House of Commons, he was far from supporting it at all points. Even in that particular, he admitted that Government could not be carried on by Ministers who had not the confidence of the House of Commons, but he asserted, and triumphantly proved, that that House had not the confidence of the nation. For the long delay in putting the matter to the test, Fox, not he, was responsible.

In reality, then, there was no violation of the constitution, and no change in Pitt's relations to the Crown. True, he had sought to reconcile its prerogatives with the functions of Parliament; but his attitude towards George III was still marked by a proud independence, which often caused annoyance.[2] He brought forward measures which the King disapproved; and in all important matters he had his way down to the spring of 1801, when George III demurred on conscientious grounds. The shelving of the cause of Parliamentary Reform by Pitt after the year 1785 resulted from the utter indifference of the nation, not from any bargain that he had corruptly struck with the King.

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[1] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 244-6.

[2] "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 22.

But if the memorable contest of 1784 has not the significance sometimes ascribed to it in partisan narratives, it is of great moment in regard to the monarchy, the Cabinet, and the course of events at St. Stephen's. George III came forth victorious from his long struggle with the Whig Houses; but the magnitude of the peril had taught him prudence and self-restraint; and, while keeping a tight hand on patronage, he was thenceforth content, in the more important sphere of legislation, to leave a free hand to the Minister who had saved him from the open conflict with the Commons which Fox had sought to precipitate. The relations between the King and Prime Minister therefore came to resemble those which had subsisted between the first two Georges and Walpole.

Consequently, the growth in the powers of the Cabinet, which had been interrupted since the fall of that Minister, now proceeded normally. During the seventeen years of Pitt's supremacy the principle became firmly established that the chief Minister of the Crown was the centre of authority, and that, while holding that authority nominally from the King, he exercised it by virtue of a mandate from the people. George, therefore, had escaped from the thraldom of the Coalition only in order to bow before an authority which was at once constitutional and irresistible. He no longer had to do with the nominee of a dozen great families, but with a man who had the clearly expressed confidence of the nation. The same fact tended to make the Cabinet of the future more and more a homogeneous and well disciplined Council, obeying the impulsion of the first Minister, and adding force to his declarations of policy. No longer was it possible, as in Lord North's decade of office, for the Ministers to act singly and at the behests of the sovereign. George III's policy of *divide et impera* might succeed with North; it could not but fail before the iron resolution of Pitt. The King's acquiescence in the new order of things enabled him to regain much of the ground which he had earlier lost by his masterful efforts to govern as well as reign. Well was it for the British monarchy that those disputes were settled before the storms of the French Revolution beat upon that ancient fabric.

Finally, we may note that Pitt was far more than a second Walpole. The sturdy Norfolk squire wielded power, as a nominee of the Whig Houses; but Pitt was established in office by a wider and grander mandate. The General Election of 1784 ended the existing party system and shattered the rule of the Whig families who had hitherto dominated the Georgian Era. The somnolent acquiescence of the populace in that headship now gave way to a more critical spirit, to a sense that the traditional parties must readjust themselves under a new leader. Chatham's conception of a union which should absorb the best elements of both Whigs and Tories received a startlingly complete fulfilment; for the greatest of the results of the election of 1784 was the emergence of a party which may be termed national.

CHAPTER VIII

RETRENCHMENT

In the arithmetic of the customs, two and two, instead of making four, make sometimes only one.—DEAN SWIFT.

WHEN the sixteenth Parliament of Great Britain met on 18th May 1784 the arrears of legislation and accumulation of debt were as serious as at any time in our history; for, owing to fierce party strifes and the distractions of war, very few remedial measures had been passed in recent years. The "Economic Reform" passed by Lord Rockingham's Government is the only oasis in an otherwise arid waste, strewn with the wrecks of partisan warfare. The condition of affairs was therefore becoming most serious; and a collapse could be averted only by the utmost skill and care. The three per cent. government stocks told a tale of waning confidence. Even after the peace they steadily declined, from an average of 65 in January 1783 to 56 at the close of that year. They were as low as 53⅞ in part of January 1784; and it is a striking tribute to the confidence which Pitt inspired that, on the results of the elections of the spring of 1784 being known, they rose to more than 58. That first essential to a revival of national credit, a firm Government, was now assured, and patriots looked anxiously for the measures whereby the young Minister might stave off disaster.

The King's Speech laid stress on two topics, finance and the East India Company. Within the limits of a short session Pitt could not possibly hope to pass other large measures; and he urged Alderman Sawbridge not to persevere with his annual motion in favour of Parliamentary Reform, promising to bring it forward himself in the session of 1785. When the Alderman pressed the matter to a division, he was defeated by a majority of seventy-four—a result damaging to the cause which he sought to serve.[1]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiv, 1006.

The way being thus left clear for the two great questions that would admit of no delay, Pitt sought to lay the ghost of national bankruptcy. The imminence of the danger can scarcely be realized. In that decade we link together the thought of bankruptcy with that of France; but if those years closed with the Revolution in France and prosperity in England, the result may be ascribed very largely to the wasteful financial system pursued at Versailles and to the wise husbanding of Britain's resources by Pitt. According to the French statesman, Necker, the National Debts of the two countries were almost exactly equal.[1] The pamphlet literature of the years 1783-84 reveals a state of things wellnigh as serious in England as that which brought about the crash in France. One of the closest students of finance, Dr. Price, in a pamphlet of the early part of 1783, stated that the Fox-North Ministry openly avowed its inability to pay off any of the public debts; and he asserted that such helpless conduct must carry us fast to the brink of disaster. Another writer urged that, in order to abolish the National Debt, tithes must be swept away, the revenues of the Church reformed, and all citizens must submit to the payment of one-sixth part of their incomes. The National Debt, which amounted to £215,717,709 in January 1783, was denounced in language whose extravagance would cause a mild surprise to a generation that placidly bears a burden nearly four times as great; but, to a kingdom which with the utmost difficulty raised £25,000,000 in revenue, this burden seemed overwhelming. Dr. Price summed up a wide-spread conviction in his statement that the growth of debt brought about increased subservience to the Crown, prosperity to stock-jobbers, and depression to all honest traders.[2]

The war which ended in 1783 had been carried on in a singularly wasteful manner. Price computed that the increase to the National Debt owing to the war had been £115,654,000 up to January 1783, when all the accounts had not yet come in; he also reckoned that the last four years of that struggle had cost £80,016,000 as against £60,835,000 for the last four years of the Seven Years' War. This increase resulted largely from the reckless way in which North had issued loans, so that bankers and subscribers, and, it is said, the Ministers themselves, reaped large profits, while the nation suffered. According to Price, loans which cost the nation £85,857,691, actually brought to the exchequer only £57,500,000.[1] This resulted partly from corrupt practices, but also from North's endeavour to keep down the rate of interest to three or four per cent.; the outcome being that, in the impaired state of public credit of the year 1781 he had to allot £150 of stock in the three per cents and £25 in the four per cents for every £100 actually borrowed. Thus, the raising of a sum of £12,000,000 on these terms actually cost the nation £21,000,000; and interest had to be paid on £9,000,000 which never came into the exchequer. Obviously he would have done better to raise £100 for £100 stock, even had he given 6 or 7 per cent. interest; for the experience of the past showed that in time of peace and prosperity the rate of interest could be reduced without much difficulty. Nevertheless, the advisers of the Crown always preferred to keep to a low rate of interest, even at the cost of tempting lenders by allotting £175 of Government stock for every £100 of cash.

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[1] Necker, "De l'Administration des Finances de la France," 3 vols. (1784).

[2] "Observations on Reversionary Payments," by R. Price, i, 206. When all the expenses of the war were added, by the year 1786, the National Debt amounted to £245,466,855. See Parl. Paper, No. 443, Sept. 1858.

Such was the state of affairs when Pitt introduced his Budget (30th June 1784). It will be convenient to set forth and explain his proposals singly and in connection with the facts which he had to face. The first was the appallingly large deficit, constantly swollen by the coming in of bills for war expenses. The champion of peace and retrenchment had to confess that, despite all his efforts to balance income and expenditure, he must raise a loan of £6,000,000. Obviously, as Consols still stood as low as 58, he could borrow only on exorbitant terms; but it is regrettable that he now fell back on North's plan of borrowing at a low rate of interest and of burdening the funds with a vast amount of fictitious debt. He proposed to allot to every subscriber of £100 no less an amount of stock than £100 of three per cents, £50 of four per cents, and 5*s.* 6*d.* of long annuities, besides three fifths of a lottery ticket in a lottery of 36,000 tickets.[2] He computed that the terms and chances now offered were actually worth £103 14*s.* 4½*d.*, and that lenders would therefore be tempted to lend.[1] This was so. But, for the reasons stated above, the burdens bequeathed to posterity were crushing, though less than those entailed by North's loan of 1781.

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[1] R. Price, "State of the Public Debts and Finances in January 1783," 5, 8, 19.

[2] Pitt reckoned a State lottery as yielding a profit of £140,000; but obviously he disliked this means of raising money ("Parl. Hist.," xxv, 1307).

As regards Pitt's personal dealings with financiers, his conduct shone radiantly clear when contrasted with those of Lord North. It had been the custom for that guardian of the public purse to arrange the price of the loan with a few favoured supporters in the City, and then allot scrip on scandalously low terms to his friends in Parliament, who could thereafter sell at a handsome profit. Pitt now threw open to public competition all tenders for his loan; and the proposals sent in were formally opened at the Bank in a way which precluded jobbery and safeguarded the nation's interests.

Scarcely less serious was the problem of the huge floating, or unfunded, debt, that is, that portion of the National Debt for which no provision whatever had been made by Parliament. In the main it consisted of unpaid bills, which had been increased by about one quarter or even one third of their original amount. It now stood at about £14,000,000. Pitt ardently desired to fund the whole of it, but he found that so great an effort would cause too much disturbance in the money market. He therefore proposed to fund at present only £6,600,000, forming it into stock bearing 5 per cent. interest and issued at 93. He defended this high rate of interest on the ground that such a stock could in the future be redeemed on more favourable terms than a three per cent. stock which might be worth a comparatively small sum when capitalized. The argument was surely just as applicable to the former loan of £6,000,000.[2]

It still remains to notice the worst ills that beset the fiscal and commercial life of our land. Indeed, we shall not understand the daring nature of Pitt's experiment of the year 1784 unless we take a comprehensive view of the losses, both material and moral, which resulted from the extraordinary prevalence of smuggling. Never had contraband trade been so active as of late. How should it be otherwise, when the customs dues were tangled and burdensome; when the Navigation Laws, especially respecting the coasting trade in Scotland, were so annoyingly complex that the papers which a vessel needed for crossing the Firth of Forth involved nearly as much expense and delay as if she were bound for Canada.[1] In such a state of things illicit trade was ever gaining recruits from the ranks of honest merchants and seamen.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiv, 1021.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1022-4.

For monopoly, too, depressed their calling and exalted that of the smuggler. By far the most important article subject to monopoly was tea. That expensive luxury of the days of Queen Anne, a "dish of tea," was now fast becoming a comfort of the many. Indeed, Arthur Young found that the use of tea had spread into the homes of cottagers; and he classed as extravagant those villages which owed their refreshment to China, and commended the frugality of those which adhered to home-brewed ale.[2] The increased use of Bohea was certainly not due to the East India Company or to the State; for the former sold the "drug" at the high prices warranted by its monopoly of trade with China; and on the arrival of the precious chests at our shores, an *ad valorem* duty of 119 per cent. had to be met. The increase of habits which Arthur Young deprecated and temperance reformers now applaud was due to smugglers. We learn from Adam Smith that Dutch, French, and Swedish merchants imported tea largely;[3] and from their ports enterprising skippers conveyed it to our shores, there to be eagerly welcomed by a populace which found the cheating of Government far more attractive and gainful than agriculture. The annals of the time show how deeply the coast population was infected. The large barns which the tourist admires in many an East Anglian coast village, more often held contraband than corn. Thomas Hardy has shown how the dull life of a Wessex village kindled at the news of a successful "run in," and how all classes helped to defeat the "King's men." The poet Crabbe, with his keen eye for the stern realities of life in his parish of Aldborough, tells of his grief at finding there, not the simple home-loving life of an old English village,

> But a bold, artful, surly savage race.

Their sport was not cricket or wrestling on the village green, but smuggling.

> Beneath yon cliff they stand
> To show the freighted pinnace where to land,

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiv, 1015.

[2] A. Young, "Farmer's Letters," 197.

[3] "Wealth of Nations," bk. i, ch. xi, pt. 3; "Parl. Hist.," xxiv, 1012.

To load the ready steed with guilty haste,
To fly with terror o'er the pathless waste,
Or, when detected in their straggling course,
To foil their foes by cunning or by force,
Or yielding part (which equal knaves demand)
To gain a lawless passport through the land.

These are the words of a moralist. To the easy-going many the smuggler was merely a plucky fellow who cheated the common foe of all, the Government, and helped poor folks to get spirits, tea, and tobacco at cheap prices. As for showing any reluctance to buy smuggled goods, this seemed "a pedantic piece of hypocrisy."[1] It must also be admitted that Government had sinned against light; for the great reduction of the tea duty by Pelham in 1745 had almost put an end to smuggling in that article; but unfortunately his successors, when confronted with the results of war, re-imposed the old duties and thereby gave new life to the smuggler's calling.[2]

The excess of an evil sometimes works its cure. It was the stupidity of the fiscal regulations in France which helped to turn the attention of her most original thinkers to the subject of national finance; whence it came about that Political Economy had its first beginnings in the land where waste and want were rampant. So, too, it was reserved for the son of a Kirkcaldy customs officer to note early in life the follies of our system; and, when further enlightened by contact with men and affairs, especially with the French *Economistes*, he was able to give to the world that illuminating survey of a subject where tradition and prejudice had previously reigned supreme. Finally, it was in the very darkest hour of Britain's commercial and financial annals that remedial measures were set on foot by the young statesman who had laid to heart the teachings of the "Wealth of Nations."

It is not easy to say whether Pitt owed more to Adam Smith or to Earl Shelburne. Probably the influence of the Scottish thinker on the young statesman at this time has been exaggerated; for it seems certain that the later editions of the "Wealth of Nations" were modified so as to bring them into line with some of Pitt's enactments.[3] Further, Pitt made no public acknowledgement of his debt to Adam Smith until his Budget speech of 1792, when he expressed the belief that the philosopher, then deceased, had given to the world the best solution to all commercial and economic questions. It may be, then, that Pitt in 1784 owed less to Adam Smith than to his first chief, Shelburne, and to other men of affairs, including his own brother-in-law, that able though eccentric nobleman, Lord Mahon. Shelburne was the depository of the enlightened aims of that age; and, as Price pointed out, he and Pitt in the year 1782 were about to make reforms in the public service which would have saved the revenue some half a million a year.[1]

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[1] "Wealth of Nations," bk. v, ch. ii, § 4.
[2] Dowell, "Hist. of Taxation," ii, 183.
[3] I owe this interesting fact to the Rev. Dr. Cunningham.

Now, with a freer hand, he took up the task which the Coalition of Fox and North had interrupted; and in a measure which supplemented his Budget, he proposed to cut the ground from under the smuggler by reducing the duty on tea from an average of 119 per cent. to 12½ per cent. on the cheaper varieties, though on the finer kinds of tea (Suchong, Singlo, and Hyson) he imposed a higher scale of duties.[2] Even so, he expected that the produce of the tea duty would sink at first from £800,000 to £169,000, though he must have hoped soon to recoup a large part of this sum. As there was a large deficit on the past year, it was necessary to devise a tax which would help to make up the temporary loss with no risk of leakage.

Such a source of revenue Pitt found in an increase of the window-tax. Every house with seven windows was now to pay, not four shillings, but seven shillings a year. On a house with eight windows eight shillings were paid, and so on, except that houses with more than ten windows paid half-a-crown per window. He reckoned the increase from this source at about £700,000. Whatever objections might be urged against the tax on the score of health, it certainly fell mainly on the middle and wealthy classes; for as many as 300,000 of the poorest houses went duty free. The impost may therefore be considered as a first rough attempt at taxation according to income. The change was beneficial in another way. The old customs duty on tea violated the canon of taxation laid down by Adam Smith—that a tax should take from the pockets of the people as little as possible over and above what it brings into the treasury of the State. The 119 per cent. duty seemed to challenge evasion, and the attempt to enforce it probably cost the country more than the tax yielded. The window tax belonged to the class of excise duties the expenses of which amounted only to about 5½ per cent. of the total yield; and the new impost could not possibly be evaded except by the heroic remedy of blocking up windows.

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[1] R. Price, *op. cit.*, 18, 19 (note).

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxiv, 1009.

Thus, both in regard to economic doctrine and common sense (the former is but the latter systematized) Pitt's experiment ushered in a new era in British finance and therefore in British commerce. The City of London welcomed the change, which promised to lead to the employment of twenty more clipper ships for the China tea-trade and to the destruction of the contraband tea-trade to these shores carried on hitherto by the French and Dutch East India Companies. Indeed, no sooner did this Commutation Bill (as it was called) gain general assent than the Dutch Company offered to sell to us its cargoes of tea at a loss of 40 per cent. on prime cost and expenses. This fact alone ought to have stilled all opposition to the measure; but Fox continued to oppose it with a vehemence worthy of a better cause; he was ultimately beaten by 143 votes to 40 (10th August 1784).[1]

We may note here that by further regulations of the year 1784 and by what was called the "Manifest Act" of 1786, frauds on the revenue were made far more difficult. Thus to Pitt belongs the credit of having done more than any minister (for he succeeded where Walpole largely failed) to stop a material loss and a grave moral evil.

It would be incorrect to claim that Pitt was the first to light on the idea of substituting lower and effective duties for the exorbitant and ineffective duty on tea. William Eden (the future Lord Auckland) declared that very many persons had advocated some such change, and he attributed to Lord John Cavendish the formation of the revenue committee, the results of whose inquiries were now utilized by the Prime Minister. Pitt, on the other hand, gave the credit of the measure to his relative, Lord Mahon. The mention of that nobleman reminds us of an incident which enlivened the debate. While sawing the air in order to emphasize his hearty approval of the death blow now dealt to smuggling, he gave Pitt a smart knock on the head, to the unbounded amusement of the House.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiv, 1354.

The details of the Budget itself do not imply a very firm belief in the principles of what is called Free Trade. As has been shown, the difficulties in Pitt's way were enormous. The new loan, the funding operation, and the interest on the unfunded debt altogether entailed an added charge of £910,000 a year. This sum he proposed to raise by means that may be termed old-fashioned. Looking round the domain of industry, he singled out for taxation the few articles that were duty-free or were only lightly burdened. Men's hats were now to pay a toll of two shillings a-piece (felt hats only sixpence), and thus bring £150,000 to the nation's purse; female finery (ribbons and gauzes) was mulcted to the extent of £120,000. He also estimated that a duty of three shillings on every chaldron of coals (not only in London as heretofore, but throughout Great Britain) would bring in about £150,000; but he proposed to free from its operations all manufacturers who met with sharp foreign competition. Further, he imposed a tax on all horses used for riding or for pleasure, which he estimated at £100,000; and he eked out the remainder of the sum by duties on printed linens and calicoes, candles, hackney coaches, bricks and tiles, paper, licences for shooting, and licences for traders in excisable goods.

Most of these proposals were received with resignation, but several members urgently protested against the impost on coals as likely to be ruinous to industry, and ultimately Pitt withdrew it. This, however, led him to impose a tax on race-horses (especially winners), to raise the licence for shooting from one guinea to two guineas, to increase the postage for letters, and to curtail the privileges of franking letters by Members of Parliament. This had been disgracefully abused. Every member of both Houses had the right both of sending and of receiving letters free. As if this were not sufficient, in days when a shilling was an ordinary charge for the receiver of a letter, several members were known to sell envelopes which they had franked; and a large firm is said to have paid a member £300 a year for franking their correspondence. Pitt struck at these abuses by requiring that franked letters must bear the name of the member, the date, and the post town from which the letter was to be sent. By this and other restrictions a leakage which had amounted to nearly £200,000 a year was stopped, at least in part. The notion that every Member of Parliament ought to enjoy privileges which were withheld from the many was so deeply rooted that the abuses of "franking" persisted up to the time of the complete abolition of the privilege in 1840, when penny postage became the law of the land. Thus in January 1802 we find a distinguished diplomatist, Sir George Jackson, commiserating his sister on the scarcity of noblemen in Bath, which implied "a dearth of *frank-men* to fly to."

The effort to curb the abuses of that hateful class privilege forms the best feature of Pitt's Budget of 1784. In other respects it is not remarkable. The new imposts have none of the merits attending his Commutation Act for the repression of smuggling. What is surprising is that he did not try the experiment of increasing the House Duty, an impost which fell mainly upon the rich, was easy to collect, and could be made very remunerative.[1] It was actually tried by North in 1778, apparently because it had borne good results in Holland.[2] Thus, the machinery was at hand, and only needed to be more strenuously worked. I have failed to find in the Pitt Papers the reason why the statesman did not try this expedient; still less why he imposed the niggling and irritating little taxes named above. He estimated the yield of the duties on bricks, paper, and hackney coaches at no more than £50,000, £18,000, and £12,000 respectively. Further, the tax on candles, though only of one halfpenny the pound, was certainly burdensome to the poor. On the whole, it is not surprising that a rhymester thus set forth the condition of John Bull:

> One would think there's not room one new impost to put
> From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot.
> Like Job, thus John Bull his condition deplores,
> Very patient, indeed, and all covered with sores.

Other persons of a quasi-scientific turn sought comfort in the reflection that taxation ought, like the air, to press on the individual at all points in order not to be felt.

In truth, Pitt's financial genius matured slowly. Possibly he thought the situation too serious to admit of doubtful experiments. Certainly he went step by step, as is seen by reference to his next Budget. Its most significant feature was the endeavour to simplify the collection of taxes. Hitherto there had been much overlapping and consequent waste of effort, owing to the existence of three Boards or Committees. The Excise

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[1] "Wealth of Nations," bk. v, ch. ii, § 1.

[2] Cunningham, 548.

Department managed the taxes on carriages, wagons, carts, and male-servants; the new taxes on horses and race-horses were under the Commissioners of Stamps; while separate Commissioners administered the imposts on houses and windows. In place of this complex, expensive, and inefficient machinery, Pitt instituted a single "Board for Taxes," which supervised affairs more cheaply and left few loopholes for evasion. The imposts named above were thenceforth termed "the assessed taxes."[1] In that year he also imposed taxes on female servants, shops, and attorneys. Here again his fiscal policy distinctly belonged to the old order of things, when men, despairing of finding any widespread and very lucrative tax, grumblingly submitted to duties on every article of consumption and every important action of life. The days of a few simple and highly productive taxes had not fully dawned.[2] The sequel will show that, only under the intolerable pressure of the long war with France, did Pitt work his way to the Income Tax; and the terms in which he replied to the Lord Provost of Glasgow, who in March 1798 recommended that impost, show that, while always favouring it on theoretical grounds, he doubted the possibility of collecting it systematically.

In 1785 we are still in the age of youthful hopes and experiments. We find Pitt writing to Wilberforce on the last day of September: "The produce of our revenues is glorious, and I am half mad with a project which will give our supplies the effect almost of magic in the reduction of debt."[3] Equally hopeful is his letter to Lord Buckingham on 8th November, in which he speaks of the rise of stocks being fully justified by the splendid surplus of "£800,000 per annum at least. The little that is wanting to make good the complete million may be had with ease."[4] Both references are to the plan of a Sinking Fund which was to work wonders with the National Debt, blotting it out in two or three generations by the alchemy of compound interest.

The plan of a Sinking Fund was not wholly his, although it came to bear Pitt's name. Walpole, early in his career, had started a scheme whereby a certain sum was annually set apart for forming a fund which would accumulate by compound interest and finally be available for the extinction of the National Debt. This plan came to grief, because in 1732 Walpole began to draw on his own fund rather than increase the Land Tax and annoy country gentlemen. This, we may note, is one of the perils of a Sinking Fund that, guard it as its founder may, some thriftless Chancellor of the Exchequer will insist on filching from it. That was the fate of Walpole's fund. The scheme, however, survived, and received a new impulse in 1772, when Dr. Price, a Nonconformist minister, called public attention to it by a pamphlet on the National Debt. In this he proved by irrefutable arithmetic that a Sinking Fund, if honestly worked, must ultimately wipe out the largest debt that can be conceived. For, as he hopefully pointed out, a single seed, if its produce could be entirely set apart for sowing, would in course of time multiply so vastly as to fill all the lands where it could grow. This is true; but the simile implies singular powers of self-control in the sowers, especially if they are beset by hunger before that glorious climax is attained. Descending to the more practical domain of the money market, Price proved that a sum of £200,000, set apart annually, together with its compound interest, would in eighty-six years be worth £258,000,000. Whether the nation were at peace or at war, said Dr. Price, the stipulated sum must be set aside, even if it were borrowed at a high rate of interest; for the nation borrowed at simple interest in order to gain the advantages of compound interest. While admitting the folly of such conduct for a private individual, he maintained with equal *naïveté* that a State must benefit by it, even if there were no surplus of revenue and if money were dear.[1]

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[1] Dowell, ii, 187, 188.

[2] In Pitt MSS., 353, I have found a memoir of the East India Company containing this sentence: "Much will he deserve of his country who can devise a mode of anything like equal taxation by any single tax."

[3] "Corresp. of W. Wilberforce," i, 9.

[4] Chevening MSS.

Such was the scheme which fired Pitt with hope; but it is very questionable whether he accepted all its details. Certainly he did not act precipitately. On 11th April 1785 he felt the pulse of the House of Commons by stating his confident hope of having a surplus of one million available for the present plan, and his determination next year to found "a real Sinking Fund" on a basis which would absolutely preclude pilfering in the future. It is also noteworthy that he resolved to raise that million by taxation, not by borrowing. This is a fact which has been ignored by Hamilton, McCulloch, Lecky, and other critics of Pitt's experiment; but the debate just referred to and those soon to be considered place it beyond possibility of denial. Mr. Dempster urged him to begin at once, even if he had to borrow, seeing that France had started a Sinking Fund which "would enable her in a few years to get rid of the greatest part of her National Debt." But the Prime Minister declined to be hurried, especially if he had to borrow at a high rate of interest.[1] Clearly, then, Pitt did not share the extravagant hopes of Price.

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[1] R. Price, "Treatise on Reversionary Annuities" (1772).

His relations to Price cannot be wholly cleared up. Early in January 1786 he wrote to him in the following terms:

> The situation of the revenue certainly makes this the time to establish an effectual Sinking Fund. The general idea of converting the 3 per cents with a fund bearing a higher rate of interest, with a view to facilitate redemption, you have on many occasions suggested, and particularly in the papers you were so good as to send me last year. The rise of the stocks has made a material change since that period, and I am inclined to think something like the plan I now send you may be more adapted to the present circumstances.[2] There may be, I believe, some inaccuracies in the calculations, but not such as to be very material. Before I form any decisive opinion, I wish to learn your sentiments upon it, and shall think myself obliged to you for any improvement you can suggest if you think the principle a right one, or for any other proposal which from your knowledge of the subject you may think preferable.

With his reply Price sent the three alternative plans which the curious may peruse in his "Memoir and Works." Unfortunately the ten volumes consecrated to his fame by his nephew, William Morgan, are instinct with so bitter a prejudice against Pitt as to be worthless on all questions affecting him. Morgan does not print Pitt's proposal, but brushes it aside as puerile, and gives the impression that Price did so; he gives no account of the interview which Pitt had with Price in the middle of January, but asserts that the Minister threw aside his own proposals, adopted the third and least efficient of Price's plans, mangled it in the process, and never acknowledged his debt to his benefactor.[1] The first of these charges can be refuted by Price's reply to Pitt's letter given above. He pronounced the Prime Minister's proposals "very just," but pointed out some defects, especially the proviso which placed the Sinking Fund at the disposal of Parliament when the interest on it amounted to £4,000,000, as he expected it would by the year 1812.[2] Morgan's unfairness is further revealed by his statement that Pitt did not choose to increase the taxes in 1786 so as to provide the million surplus which ought to have been forthcoming. Whereas the fact is that in the Budget of 1785 the Minister imposed taxes for that very purpose; and when these proved scarcely sufficient, he imposed others on 29th March 1786.[3]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 419-30.

[2] Consols which touched 54¼ in January 1785 rose to 69¾-73½ in December of that year.

False and acrid charges such as these do not surprise us in the partisan biographies of that age. What is surprising is that McCulloch and Lecky should have endorsed some of Morgan's statements, especially respecting Pitt's omission of his acknowledgements to Price.[4] On this I must observe, firstly, that it is not proven that Pitt owed to Price everything that was good in his Sinking Fund, and spoiled the plan by his own alterations of it; for the omission of Pitt's proposal by Morgan leaves us without means of comparing the original proposals of the two men; secondly, that the official reports of the three debates of the spring of 1786 on this subject are so meagre as to furnish no decisive evidence on what was, after all, a minor detail. Further, it is probable that Price's influence on Pitt's proposal was less than has been supposed. In the Pitt Papers is a letter of Pulteney to Pitt dated 18th April 1786, in which he urges him carefully to reconsider Price's third plan before finally adopting it. He states that Sir John Sinclair, Sir Edward Ferguson, Mr. Beaufoy, and Mr. Dempster had yesterday met Dr. Price at Bath House in order to discuss the merits of Price's plan, and also one by Mr. Gale. The discussion left Pulteney with the conviction that Gale's plan was "infinitely preferable to any of the three produced by Dr. Price," and he begged Pitt to add it to his Bill as an alternative.[5] I have not found a copy of Gale's plan or any evidence as to its adoption in part by Pitt; but the statesman certainly repudiated the notion of borrowing in order to pay off debt, on which Price had laid stress. And yet by a strange irony of fate, this expedient, to which the statesman had temporary recourse only under the strain of war, is that which has been pronounced by nearly all critics the characteristic part of his scheme.

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[1] "Memoir and Works of R. Price," by W. Morgan (1816), i, 120-5; "A Review of Dr. Price's Writings on Finance," by W. Morgan (1792).

[2] Pitt MSS., 169.

[3] "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 419-30, 1303.

[4] Lecky, v, 51.

[5] Pitt MSS., 169.

The chief features of Pitt's proposals were his efforts to raise the whole of the annual million from revenue, and to safeguard this fund from the depredations of wasteful financiers in the future.[1] He therefore placed it under the control of six responsible persons, among whom were the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England. The disposal by Parliament of the fund when the yearly income arising from it should amount to four millions, may be termed a concession of the financier to the parliamentary spirit.

The scheme met merely with indirect criticism, the debates turning on general policy, or on the question whether there was a surplus of a million, or any surplus at all. These were the issues to which the eager partisanship of Fox and Sheridan sought to divert the attention of the House. Let them beware, exclaimed Fox, of tying up a sum of a million a year, when they might want all their available resources for a war. As for Sheridan, he sought to ridicule the experiment, not on financial grounds, but because it was the height of folly to add to the present enormous burdens when "we had but one foe, and that the whole world."

There seems to have been in these debates no reference to Dr. Price's schemes, though they then enjoyed considerable notoriety. Mention was made of the writings of Baron Maseres on the efficacy of Compound Interest; but the Opposition confined itself almost entirely to complaints about the taxes, and gloomy prophecies about the advent of another war. Surely some member of that angry and disappointed group would have accused Pitt of filching his scheme wholesale from that of Price, if the charge had been possible. We can imagine that Sheridan, instead of croaking over the impending coalition of Europe against England, would in that case have declaimed against Pitt as the thief of the magic wand of the real Prospero of finance. Would not Fox also have brought his sound and sturdy sense to the congenial task of exposing the fallacies of

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 1294-1312, 1367, 1368, 1416-30.

Price and the imposture of Pitt? The darling of Brooks's Club, who well knew the perils of borrowing in order to pay off old debts, would have fastened on the folly of borrowing at high rates in order to gain the advantage of Compound Interest. We can picture him asking how a plan, which was admittedly foolish for an individual, could be profitable for a nation, and where the taxes could be raised that would make good the interest on the sums set apart every year for the wonder-working fund. Surely the Opposition was not so ignorant of finance and of Price's proposals as not to detect the weakness of the Prime Minister's plan, had it been modelled solely on them.[1]

The debates in which the Commons dealt with this great and complex subject seem to have been fruitful only in personalities. At the final stage of the Bill, however, Fox moved an amendment with the aim of lightening the burdens on the nation in time of war. He proposed that, whenever a new loan should be raised, the Minister should be pledged to raise moneys sufficient to pay the interest on the loan, and also to make good to the Sinking Fund what might be taken from it. He stated as a concrete example that, if a new loan of £6,000,000 were required in time of war, and if £1,000,000 were in the hands of the Commissioners of the National Debt, that sum should be transferred to the account of the loan; for this, he claimed, would save the public the expense of raising that million through bankers and the Stock Exchange, and the Sinking Fund would not be injured if the million temporarily borrowed from it were made good by taxation. His speech contained one statement of personal interest, namely, that he had shown his proposal to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who approved of it. This, then, was one of the few occasions on which Pitt conferred with Fox. He now accepted Fox's amendment, because (to take the supposed case), apart from the saving of commission on the million, Government would be able to raise the five millions on better terms than the six millions. Pitt also expressed the hope that the addition of the amendment to his Bill would do away with all temptation to a Minister to rob the Sinking Fund.[2]

This last argument cut both ways. As Earl Stanhope

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[1] These formed the chief charges urged against the Sinking Fund by R. Hamilton, "An Inquiry concerning . . . the Management of the National Debt' (1813).

[2] "Parl Hist" xxv, 1430-32.

(formerly Lord Mahon) pointed out to the Lords, when he introduced a rival scheme a few days later, it would be absurd to lessen the temptation to commit an offence which he (Pitt) had declared to be thenceforth impossible. In fact, the permission to transfer the yearly million to another fund rather tended to strengthen the argument for alienation in any other case where expediency might be urged. Stanhope's plan for rendering the Sinking Fund permanent is too complex to be discussed here; the debates on it were closed by the royal assent being given to Pitt's measure on 26th May.[1]

If we examine carefully the many criticisms that have been levelled against Pitt's Sinking Fund, they apply only to his handling of the fund during the Great War with France. Every sciolist in finance can now see the folly of borrowing money at a high rate of interest in order to provide the fund with its quarterly supply.[2] It is clearly a case of feeding a dog on his own tail. But such a proceeding, though lauded by Price, was quite contrary to Pitt's original intention, which was the thoroughly sound one of paying off debt by a steady application of the annual surplus. He departed from this only under stress of circumstances which he looked on as exceptional and temporary.

Strange to say, even the officials of the Treasury seem to have overlooked the fact that the nation was thereby increasing its debt in a cumbrous attempt to lessen it. In 1799, when the pinch caused by the withdrawal of a million a year was severely felt, George Rose, the Secretary of the Treasury, praised the Sinking Fund as an example of integrity and economy which must in the highest degree promote the prosperity of the nation. And Lord Henry Petty, who succeeded Pitt as Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated in his first Budget Speech in March 1806 that "it was owing to the institution of the Sinking Fund that the country was not charged with a much larger amount of debt. It was an advantage gained by nothing." This extraordinary statement, coming from a political opponent, shows how that generation was mesmerized by the potency of Compound Interest.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxvi, 17-36. Earl Stanhope's measure will be described by Miss Ghita Stanhope in her monograph on the Earl.

[2] J. R. McCulloch, "Taxation and the Funding System," 3rd edit., 1883, 477-81.

Yet, delusive as the scheme came to be, it conferred two benefits on Great Britain. Firstly, it tended to the reduction of the National Debt during the time of peace. Nearly eleven millions were written off in the years 1784-1792;[1] and the country felt no inconvenience until the million had to be borrowed at ruinous rates. But, far more than this, faith in the Sinking Fund buoyed up British credit at a time when confidence was the first essential of the public safety. In the dark days of 1797 and 1805 Britons were nerved by the spirit of their leader, who never quailed even in face of mutiny, disaster, and the near approach of bankruptcy. There are times when unjustifiable trust is better than the most searching scrutiny. Finally, it is the barest justice to the memory of Pitt to remember that his whole financial policy in the early part of the Great War rested on the assumption that France would soon be overborne; and, as we shall see, that assumption was justified by the experience of the past and by every outward sign in her present life. It was the incalculable element in the French Revolution, from the *levée en masse* of 1793 down to Austerlitz in 1805, which baffled Pitt and metamorphosed his Sinking Fund into a load of lead.

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[1] Hamilton, *op. cit.* McCulloch admits only half that amount. In the Pitt MSS. (No. 275) is an account of the stocks purchased for the Sinking Fund up to 5th January 1796. They amounted to £18,001,655 and Annuities equal to £89,675. See, too, Pitt's Memoranda on the Sinking Fund in "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies."

CHAPTER IX

REFORM

Unblest by Virtue, Government a league
Becomes, a circling junto of the great
To rob by law; Religion mild, a yoke
To tame the stooping soul, a trick of State
To mask their rapine, and to share their prey.
THOMSON, *Liberty*.

The distempers of monarchy were the great subjects of apprehension and redress in the last century; in this, the distempers of Parliament.—BURKE, *Thoughts on the present Discontents*.

THE experience of statesmen has generally led them to link together the question of retrenchment with that of Reform. The connection between these two topics indeed lies in the nature of things. The brunt of taxation has in the past fallen on the middle and artisan classes; and where they have only a small share in the government, the spending departments are apt to run riot. Under an oligarchy or plutocracy the Government is likely to become a close preserve for the benefit of landless younger sons, the preservation of great estates being thus assured by means which lower the public services to the level of eleemosynary institutions. Whenever the mass of taxpayers gains political power, it will insist on efficiency and economy; or, at the worst, it will claim that the unprivileged shall also have an entry into the domain of Government. In either case, the result will be not unlike that which happens in a household where the husband sleepily pays and the wife lavishly spends. When the rude awakening comes, the spending department will probably yield to the power that holds the purse. The *ultima ratio* of husbands and Parliaments is, after all, much the same. On the other hand, if the House of Commons represents little more than the rent-receiving classes, what hope is there that it will draw the purse strings? Whence it comes about that economists have for the most part pleaded for a truly representative system.

As we have seen, Pitt had twice brought forward the question of the Reform of Parliament, and had twice suffered defeat. The need of caution was obvious; and this explains his conduct in begging that veteran reformer, Alderman Sawbridge, not to press his motion on this subject in the short session of May—August 1784. The Prime Minister, however, promised to bring it before the House of Commons early in the following session.[1] Some surprise was therefore felt on the opening day, 25th January 1785, when the King's Speech contained no promise more definite than that he would concur in every measure which would "secure the true principles of the constitution."[2] Pitt himself, while admitting that the King's Speech might in that House be assumed to be the speech of the chief Minister, stated that it was impossible to include in it a reference to that topic. The inference was obvious, that the King objected to its inclusion in the speech.

For Pitt's interest in the subject certainly had not cooled. In the spring of 1784 he had assured the Rev. Christopher Wyvill and the Yorkshire Association of his devotion to the cause in the following as yet unpublished letter.

London, March 11, 1784.[3]

GENTLEMEN,

I consider myself greatly obliged to you for the favour of your letter, which I received upon the 6th instant. I beg leave to assure you that my zeal for Reform in Parliament is by no means abated, and that I will ever exert my best endeavours to accomplish that important object.

(Signed) W. PITT.

Further, on 27th December 1784 he stated to Wyvill his intention to bring forward a Reform Bill as early as possible in the next session, and that he would "exert his whole power and credit *as a man, and as a minister, honestly and boldly*, to carry such a meliorated system of representation as may place the constitution on a footing of permanent security."[4] This at least was the version of his words which Wyvill at once circulated to Reform Committees throughout the country. With a belated access of prudence, he added a postscript, urging that it must in no case be published; but some foolish friend or wise opponent bruited it abroad, with the result that members of the House now contrasted his eagerness for Reform with his inability to secure any mention of it in the King's Speech. He might declare that the subject was the nearest to his heart, and that nothing but its complexity prevented him sketching an outline of his proposal; but members drew their own conclusions. North made a skilful use of Wyvill's letter, but elicited from Pitt no definite disclaimer of the words quoted from it. Indeed Pitt afterwards assured Wyvill that those words well expressed his thoughts.[1]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiv, 998.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1383.

[3] From Mr. Broadley's MSS.

[4] "Parl. Hist.," xxiv, 1396.

Pitt judged that it would be best to proceed circumspectly in the matter of Reform, perhaps because he wished the affair of Wyvill's letter to blow over, or because he had obstacles to face in his Cabinet. Owing to these or other causes he decided to give precedence to his resolutions for according greater freedom of trade to Ireland, which will be dealt with in another chapter; and not until 18 April 1785 did he bring before Parliament the subject of parliamentary Reform. The delay was unfortunate, for the trading classes were by this time ruffled by proposals which promised to bring in the products of Irish cheap labour.

Meanwhile Pitt drew up a draft scheme of Reform and sent it to Wyvill for his perusal. He proposed to set aside a sum of somewhat more than £1,000,000 in order to indemnify electors in nomination boroughs, provided that two-thirds of their total number should agree to forego their right of sending members to Parliament. In that case the borough should be disfranchised, the electors receiving compensation by a Parliamentary Committee after due examination of their claims. The seats thus vacated were to be added to counties or to districts of the larger counties. Pitt also hinted at the enfranchisement of certain suburban areas of London, and suggested that notoriously corrupt boroughs (such as Shoreham and Cricklade) should be disfranchised without compensation, their electoral powers being transferred to counties. He further proposed to widen the county franchise by admitting copyholders of 40 shillings a year and leaseholders whose leases had a certain term yet to run.[2]

[1] "Corresp. of Wyvill with Pitt," pt. i, 1796, 13.

[2] "Corresp. of Pitt with Wyvill," pt. ii, 1797, 1-7.

These suggestions strike us as strangely cramped, except in the matter of copyholds, which were dealt with more generously than in Earl Grey's Bill of 1831. The proposals for disfranchising the pocket boroughs resemble a political auction, Pitt dangling a million before the potwallers of Gatton, Grampound, Castle Rising, etc., as the sole means of endowing the great counties with political power, and of enabling Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Sheffield to find articulate utterance. Wyvill in 1797 noted that these towns formed a part of Pitt's scheme of enfranchisement; but the Prime Minister does not seem in 1785 to have ventured distinctly to formulate so revolutionary a proposal. In the draft of a preamble to his Bill he suggested the advisability of enlarging the electorate in the case of several towns such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Winchester, where the Corporation or the Guild Merchant alone returned the members of Parliament.

These draft proposals reveal the caution, not to say nervousness, with which Pitt approached this great subject; and the same characteristics appear in the speech of 18th April 1785 in which he introduced his measure. While lacking glow and enthusiasm, it was instinct with moderation and persuasiveness. He started with the assumption that the House of Commons ought to be "an Assembly freely elected, between whom and the mass of the people there was the closest union and most perfect sympathy"; but he proceeded to allay the fears of those who, like Burke, saw in any change a death-blow to the constitution, by disclaiming "vague and unlimited notions." He desired, he said, "a sober and practicable scheme which should have for its basis the original principle of representation." He then showed how that principle had been warped by time and Court intrigues. Sometimes method was discoverable, and he cited a case that occurred shortly after the Restoration when, after the disfranchisement of 72 boroughs, 36 of them regained their rights on petition, but the 36 others, having decreased in size, remained without representatives. Therefore, by the discretionary powers of the Crown to grant, or to withhold, representation, there was a clear recognition of the principle that the chief towns, not the decayed towns, should return members to Parliament. Who, he asked, was the truer supporter of the constitution? He who sought to preserve the mere form of it, or he who preferred its substance and essence to the empty shell? Coming next to the outlines of his scheme, he declared that he would change neither the proportion of Scottish to English members, as settled by the Act of Union of 1707, nor the numbers of the House. All that he aimed at for the present was to disenfranchise 36 decayed boroughs and to assign their 72 members to the counties which most needed a larger representation, as also to London and Westminster.

Moderation such as this implies timidity. Moreover this was not all. As we have seen, Pitt did not intend to carry out this reform by compulsion; and he now declared that, recognizing as he did the monetary value of the franchises of these decayed boroughs, he proposed to form a fund whence they might gain compensation for this undoubted loss. Very skilfully he introduced this novel proposal by deprecating the "squeamish and maiden coyness" which members affected in speaking there on a topic which they frankly discussed outside the House. For himself he faced the fact that the right of returning two members to Parliament had a certain monetary value, and he therefore offered a due indemnity. Further, if in the future any other decayed borough should wish to surrender its franchise "on an adequate consideration," he proposed to facilitate such a surrender, and to allot the two seats to any district or town that seemed most to need the franchise. Finally he desired to widen the electorate in the counties by including copyholders, whose property was as secure as, sometimes more secure than, that of the freeholders.[1]

Such were the proposals. They were brought forward at a time when Pitt had suffered in the opinion of the House, first by his obstinacy in persevering with the Westminster election scrutiny, and, secondly, by the Irish Commercial Resolutions. Members were therefore in an unsettled state of mind, and an eye-witness describes them as listening to the Prime Minister "with that sort of civil attention which people give to a person who has a good claim to be heard, but with whom the hearers are determined to disagree." The same witness, Daniel Pulteney, found that most of Pitt's friends "lamented that he would not keep clear of this absurd business—this Yorkshire system of Reform."[1]

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[1] In the "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies," I include a Memorandum—"Notes on Reform of Parliament"—from the Pretyman MSS. It is undated; but the notes form undoubtedly the rough draft of the speech outlined above, except that there is no mention of the buying out proposals at the end. May we infer that this was an afterthought, due to Dundas?

Despite this chilling reception, Pitt set forth his proposals "with the attractions of a most seductive eloquence." Such is the testimony of Wraxall, which by itself would tend to refute the venomous assertion that Pitt was not in earnest. The contrary is proved by his words and deeds. At Christmastide 1784 he begged Wilberforce to return from the south of France in order to work in the cause of Reform; and on 12th January 1785 he wrote to the Duke of Rutland in these terms: "I really think that I see more than ever the chance of effecting a safe and temperate plan [of Reform], and I think its success as essential to the credit, if not to the stability, of the present administration, as it is to the good government of the country hereafter."[2] Further, it is certain that those ardent reformers, Robert Smith (afterwards Lord Carrington) and Wyvill, had no doubt of his earnestness. The latter stated in his letters that Pitt was striving his hardest to arouse interest in the Reform of Parliament.[3]

There is also ground for thinking that the King had privately assured him that, though he regretted his advocacy of Reform, no word of his should influence any one against that measure. Wraxall, who voted against Pitt, admits that his plan of Reform was highly attractive in theory—a phrase which leaves us wondering what would have been the practical scheme of reform after which this earth-born soul was dimly groping.[4] Even Burke, who saw mortal danger to the body politic in the removal of the smallest rag of antiquity, complimented the Minister on the skill with which he had sought to make the change palateable to all parties. None the less did that fervid Celt consider the whole plan an *ignis fatuus*, calculated to mislead and bewilder. Herein Burke for once voiced the feelings of the country gentry who thought the fate of the constitution bound up with the maintenance of the rotten boroughs. The speeches of Duncombe and Wilberforce in support of the measure were poor and rambling. Dundas, an unwilling convert to Reform, had nothing better to say than that he highly approved the principle of compensation.

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[1] "Rutland P.," iii, 202.

[2] "Corresp. of Pitt with the Duke of Rutland," 84.

[3] "Corresp. of Wilberforce," i, 4; "Life of Wilberforce," i, 77; "Corresp. of Wyvill with Pitt," pt. i, 15 *n*.

[4] Stanhope, i, xv; Wraxall, iii, 116.

The chief arguments against the measure were those of North, Fox, and Bankes. The first declared that the country cared not a jot for Reform. Birmingham had not petitioned for it. One of the members for Suffolk, who sought advice from his constituents, had received no instructions from them. The effort to get up a Reform meeting in London had resulted in the attendance of only three hundred persons; and the outcome of similar efforts in the provinces might be summed up in the line from "The Rehearsal":

> What horrid sound of *silence* doth assail mine ear?

As for Fox, though he voted with Pitt, he did his best to defeat the measure. He wittily explained the silence of the people by their alarm at Pitt's Irish Resolutions; for when on the point of emigrating from a land on the brink of ruin, why should they trouble about its constitution? Further, he stoutly objected to the award of any indemnity to the owners of pocket boroughs. The same point was shrewdly pressed by Bankes. The measure, he said, was absurd on the face of it. For why declare against the whole principle of the traffic in such boroughs, and yet proceed to allow liberal compensation to the traffickers? The argument was more clever than sound, as appeared in 1834 when Parliament awarded £20,000,000 to slave-owners. The taunt also came with an ill grace from the owner and representative of Corfe Castle; but it cut Pitt to the quick. He immediately arose and avowed that the remark wounded him deeply on account of his long friendship with the speaker; the point touched was a tender one; but the evil was such that it must be cured, and it could be cured in no other way than the present. And so, in this mood of "Et tu, Brute," Pitt and his friends withdrew into the lobby, and soon learned that his third attempt to redress the glaring ills of the representation had been defeated by 248 votes to 174.

The blow was crushing and final as regards Parliamentary Reform in that age. The storms of the French Revolution and the mightier subterranean forces of the Industrial Revolution were to work upon the old order of things before the governing classes of England were brought to see the need of renovation; and when the change came in 1832, it was not until the nation had drawn near to the verge of civil war. In 1785 the transition would have been peaceful and progressive. Pitt was content to work by permissive methods, and to leave open the decision as to which of the rising industrial towns should gain the franchise as it was sold by the decaying boroughs. Such a mode of advance seems to us that of a snail, and marked by a trail of slime. But we must remember that the brains of that generation worked very slowly on political questions; for in truth they had to do with a society which was to ours almost as a lake is to a torrent. Further, it is noteworthy that the offer to buy out the pocket boroughs was the chief recommendation of Pitt's measure to the House of Commons. Burke praised him for thus gilding his pill; and Dundas's chief plea for the measure was that it did not outrage "the sacred inheritance of property." Alone among Pitt's supporters Bankes reprobated these bartering methods. The attitude of the House should be remembered, as it bears on the question how far Pitt was justified in buying off the opposition of the Irish borough-holders and others who suffered by the Act of Union of 1800.

Could Pitt have taken any further steps to ensure the passing of his Reform Bill? Mr. Lecky, followed in this by lesser historians, has maintained the affirmative. He avers that, by making it a ministerial measure, Pitt could have brought to bear on it all the influence of party discipline.[1] To this it may be replied that Pitt's majority, though large, was very independent. As will appear in the next chapter, we find him writing that he could not then count on the support of many of his followers from one day to another. They had floated together from the wreckage of the Fox and North parties, and had as yet gained no distinct cohesion, except such as arose from admiration of him. Further, he strained this feeling too severely in the session of 1785 by his harsh treatment of Fox over the Westminster election, and by pressing on three unpopular measures, namely, the Irish Resolutions (22nd February), the fortification of Portsmouth and Plymouth (14th March), and Parliamentary Reform (18th April). Sooner or later he suffered defeat on all these proposals. Yet it is clear that his followers did not intend to drive him from office, but merely to teach him caution. In this they succeeded only too well. Thereafter he acted far more warily; and, except in the Warren Hastings' case, and in the French Commercial Treaty, he for some time showed little of that power of initiative which marked the early part of the session of 1785. The fact is to be regretted; but the need of caution is manifest when we remember that a single irretrievable blunder would have entailed a Fox-North Ministry with all the discords and confusion that must have come in its train. Even zealous reformers, while regretting that Pitt did not persevere with Reform, continued to prefer him to Fox and North. This appears in a letter written by Major Cartwright at the close of the year 1788. On the news of the mental derangement of George III, that veteran reformer wrote to Wilberforce: "I very much fear that the King's present derangement is likely to produce other derangements not for the public benefit. I hope we are not to be sold to the Coalition faction. Mr. Fox is, I see, arrived, and cabal, I doubt not, is labouring with redoubled zeal under his direction to overturn the present Government."[1] The distrust felt for Fox after his union with North survived in full force even in 1788. Their accession to power, and the triumph of the Prince of Wales, were looked on as the worst of all political evils. This, I repeat, explains and justifies the determination of Pitt to continue in office.

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[1] Lecky, v, 62, 63; Jephson, "The Platform," i, 166.

But other reasons must also have influenced his decision to shelve the question of Reform at least for the present. His Cabinet was too divided on it to warrant his risking its existence on a proposal which had always been rejected. The marvel was that a Prime Minister should bring it forward. Further, if we may judge from George III's letter of 20th March, the active though secret opposition of the King was averted only by Pitt giving an unmistakable hint that he would resign if it were used against the measure.[2] Having secured the King's neutrality, Pitt could hardly go further and leave his sovereign in the lurch by breaking up his Cabinet on a question on which he alone of the executive Government felt strongly.

Another possible alternative was that he himself should resign. But this again would almost certainly have involved the fall of an Administration of which he was the keystone. It is also noteworthy that the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, whether collective or personal, had not then been definitely established. Cabinets and individual Ministers resigned on points of honour, or when they held that the Government could no longer be satisfactorily carried on. But neither of these cases had arisen. The Government of the country obviously could go on as well as before. True, a legislative proposal of great importance had been rejected; but it cannot be too clearly stated that in that century the chief work of Government was to govern, not to pass new laws. Far on in the next century the main business of a Cabinet came to be the proposing and carrying through of new measures; but this idea was foreign to that more stationary age; and probably everyone would have accused Pitt of deserting his post had he resigned owing to his inability to carry a legislative enactment of a very debatable character. Walpole has not been blamed because he held to office despite his failure to carry his very important Excise Bill.

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 191.

[2] I agree with Dr. W. Hunt ("Political Hist. of England," x, 287) in his interpretation of the King's letter quoted by Stanhope, i, App., xv.

Again, why should Pitt have persevered with the cause of Reform? Despite all the efforts of Wyvill and the Associations, only eight petitions had been sent up to the House in favour of it. The taunts of North as to the apathy of the country were unanswerable. No voice was heard in protest against the rejection of the measure; and the judgement of Wilberforce was that of practically all reformers, that, after Pitt's failure, Reform was hopeless.[1] Wyvill himself, in a pamphlet written amidst the excitements of 1793, admitted that Pitt's measure received little attention in 1785, and soon fell into oblivion—a fact which he explained by the complete satisfaction which the nation then felt with its new Ministry. Here we have the true explanation, furnished by the man who had his hand on the nation's pulse. Wyvill saw that the practical character of the reforms already carried by Pitt had reconciled the people even to rotten boroughs. He also stated that the proposals of 1785 did not go far enough to satisfy many reformers, but that they aroused the bitter hostility of the boroughmongers. There, indeed, was the gist of the difficulty. The boroughmongers carried the House with them; and it was impossible at that period to stir up a national enthusiasm which would brush aside the fears of the timid and the sophistries of the corrupt. Only under the overpowering impulse of 1832 could the House be brought to pass sentence against itself. Because Grey and Russell carried a Reform Bill nearly half a century later, is Pitt to be blamed for abandoning, after the third attempt, a measure which aroused invincible opposition in Parliament, and only the most languid interest in the nation at large?

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 113.

Further, be it noted that the conduct of Fox had irretrievably damaged the cause of Reform. His union with Lord North had split in twain the party of progress; and we have the testimony of an ardent young reformer, Francis Place, that that unprincipled union dealt a death blow to the London Society for promoting Constitutional Information, the last expiring effort of which was to publish a volume of political tracts in the year 1784.[1] Not until the year 1791 was this useful society revived, and then owing to the impulses set in motion by French democracy.

Finally, it is noteworthy that Pitt gave his support to a smaller measure of Reform brought forward in the session of 1786 by Earl Stanhope. That nobleman had persuaded Wilberforce to widen the scope of a proposal which the member for Yorkshire had first designed for that county alone. It provided for the registration of all freeholders and the holding of the poll in several places at the same time. Pitt spoke warmly for the Bill as tending to remedy the chief defects in the county representation, and he expressed the hope that at some future time the whole of the representation would undergo the same improvements (15th May). Despite the opposition of Grenville and Powys, leave was granted to bring in the measure by 98 votes to 22. Though Stanhope emphatically declared in the Lords that the summary rejection of a Bill affecting the Commons would be an act of "unutterable indecency," the Peers rejected the measure by 38 votes to 15.[2]

This was the last effort made by Pitt's friends and supporters to improve the old system. For the present, Reform had come to an *impasse*. Even practical little proposals which passed the Commons were doomed to failure in the Lords; and it was clear that nothing short of a convulsion would open up a passage. The events that followed tended to discredit the cause of progress. As will appear in Chapter XIV, the violence of the

[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 27808.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxvi, 1-5, 178-86; "Life of Wilberforce," i, 114.

Dutch democrats threatened to wreck their constitution, to degrade the position of the Prince of Orange, and to make their country a footstool of the French monarchy. Pitt perforce took the side of the Prince; and this question, together with the torpor of the populace, served by degrees to detach the young statesman from uncompromising reformers like Stanhope and Wyvill.

The defection or apathy of many of his friends in the session of 1785 was undoubtedly a severe blow to Pitt. It sounded the death-knell of his earlier idealism, and led him on, somewhat dazed, to a time marked by compromise and a tendency to rely upon "influence." Daniel Pulteney noted, when he saw him in the park on the day following the rebuff, that he was in deep sorrow.[1] That was natural in a man who had hoped to arouse the nation to a vivid interest in good government, and suddenly found himself headed back to the old paths. The shock must have been the greater as he had been guided by what I have termed his bookish outlook on life.

Pulteney, as a man of the world, pointed out to his patron, the Duke of Rutland, this defect in the young Prime Minister: "This system of Pitt's, to act upon general ideas of the propriety or wisdom of a measure, without attending enough to the means by which it can be best and most happily introduced—I mean, knowing the general opinion of the House at the time—must, I foresee, involve him in time in one or other of these difficulties," namely, the rash introduction of a measure, or its abandonment through a sudden access of distrust. Again he says that Pitt is very much "fettered in his conduct on great affairs. From a very partial and confined knowledge of the world, he is too full of caution and suspicions where there does not exist the shadow of a pretext for them; and, from having no immediate intercourse with the generality of the House of Commons here, he is as ignorant of their opinions on particular questions as if he was Minister of another country." He then states that, when Pitt suddenly came to see the facts of the case, he was apt to be unduly despondent and to bring forward only those questions on which he was sure of a majority. He concludes that this habit of "acting only on abstract principles" would greatly embarrass him; but that he might expect long to continue in power, because "whenever he was to quit, I think no Ministry, not founded on corruption, could stand against him."[1]

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[1] "Rutland P.," iii, 202.

This estimate, by a practical politician, though marked by a desire to depreciate Pitt and exalt the Duke of Rutland, goes far towards explaining the symptoms of change which are thereafter noticeable in Pitt's career. It shows us Pitt, not a superb parliamentarian dominating men and affairs from the outset, but rather an idealist, almost a *doctrinaire*, who hoped to lead his majority at his will by the inspiring power of lofty principles, but now and again found that he had to do, not with Humanity, but with humdrum men. We see him in the midst of his upward gazings, disconcerted by the force of material interests, and driven thenceforth to pay more attention to the prejudices of his party.

First in importance among the expedients to which he was driven after the spring of 1785 was the use of "influence." As was shown in the Introduction, that word, when used in a political sense, denoted the system of rewards or coercion whereby the King and his Prime Minister assured the triumph of their policy. Peerages, bishoprics, judgeships, magistracies, sinecures and gaugerships, were the dainties held out by every Ministry in order to keep their sleek following close to heel and thin the ranks of the lean and hungry Opposition. Peerages alone counted for much; for we find Pitt writing, during the Fox-North Ministry of 1783, that the King's determination not to create a single peer during their term of office must sooner or later be fatal to them. Government by rewards and exclusions was looked upon as the natural order of things; but up to the session of 1785 Pitt used "influence" sparingly. At a later date Wilberforce ventured on the very questionable assertion that Pitt's command over Parliament after the General Election of 1784 was so great that he might have governed by "principle" and have dispensed with "influence." He expressed, however, his admiration of him for refusing to associate with trading politicians, a connection which, even in the hours of recreation, was certain to bring defilement.[2]

Pitt, as we have seen, never stooped to associate with jobbers, but he seems to have decided, after the severe rebuffs of February-April 1785, to use "influence" more and more. We notice in his letters to the Duke of Rutland and Orde several injunctions as to the management of members in the Irish Parliament; and he sought to conciliate waverers by other means, such as the abandonment of those clauses of the Irish Resolutions which were most obnoxious to British traders, and an almost lavish use of honours and places. This last expedient he adopted unwillingly; for on 19th July 1785 he wrote to the Duke of Rutland that circumstances compelled him to recommend a larger addition to the British peerage than he liked, and that he was very desirous not to increase it farther than was absolutely necessary.[1] This shows that his hand was forced either by his colleagues or by the exigencies of the time. Possibly the promises of peerages had to be made in order to secure the passing of the Irish Resolutions even in their modified form. It is humiliating to reflect that this descent from a higher to a lower level of policy thenceforth secured him a majority which followed his lead, except on the isolated questions of the fortification of Portsmouth and Plymouth, and of the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the latter of which he left entirely open.

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[1] "Rutland P.," iii, 198, 203; Letters of 11th and 23rd April 1785.

[2] "Private Papers of W. Wilberforce," 72.

It will be convenient to consider here the question of the fortification of the chief national dockyards, as it shows the determination of the Prime Minister to secure economy and efficiency in the public services. As we have seen, his great aim was to carry out a work of revival in every sphere of the nation's life. When thwarted in one direction he did not relax his energies, but turned them into new channels. On the rejection of the Irish Resolutions, he urged the Duke of Rutland to seek out the most practicable means of healing the discontent in that island. Above all he suggested an alleviation in the matter of tithe (then the most flagrant of all material grievances), if possible, with the assent of the (Protestant) Established Church.[2] Similarly in the cause of Free Trade, when foiled by Anglo-Irish jealousies, he turned towards France; and, after discovering the impossibility of carrying out his aim for the regeneration of Parliament, he vindicated the claims of morality in the administration of India. Finally, it is a crowning proof of the many-sidedness and practical character of his efforts that, amidst all his strivings to reduce the National Debt, he sought to strengthen the nation's defences.

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[1] "Corresp. of Pitt with the Duke of Rutland," 150, 151.

[2] *Ibid.*, 174, 175.

Despite the many distractions of the years 1785-1786, he devoted much care and thought to the navy. Already, in 1784, he had instituted a Parliamentary inquiry into the state of the fleet and the dockyards, which brought to light many defects and pointed the way to remedies. His anxiety respecting the first line of defence also led him to keep the number of seamen at 18,000, a higher total than ever was known in time of peace; and he allotted the large sum of £2,400,000 for the building of warships by contract. Further, he sought to stop the corruption which was rife in the dockyards and the naval service.

The letter which Sir Charles Middleton (afterwards Lord Barham) wrote to him on 24th August 1786 reveals an astounding state of affairs. From his official knowledge he declared—

> The principle of our dockyards at present is a total disregard to public œconomy in all its branches; and it is so rooted in the professional officers that they cannot divest themselves of it when brought into higher stations. They have so many relatives and dependants, too, in the dockyards, that can only be served by countenancing and promoting improper expences, that they never lose an opportunity of supporting them when in their power, and on this account ought to have as small a voice as possible in creating them.[1]

In this and other letters to Pitt, Middleton expressed his belief that much might be done to check these evils by the help of a firm and upright Minister. Probably this appeal from a patriotic and hard-working official sharpened the attention which Pitt bestowed on naval affairs. We know from the notes of Sir T. Byam Martin that Pitt frequently visited the Navy Office in order to discuss business details with the Comptroller, and by his commanding ability left the impression that he might have been all his life engaged on naval affairs. In particular he used to inspect the reports of the building and repairing of the ships-of-the-line.—"He also (wrote Martin) desired to have a periodical statement from the Comptroller of the state of the fleet, wisely holding that officer responsible personally to him without any regard to the Board." The results of this impulse given by one master mind were speedily seen. More work was got out of the dockyards, and twenty-four new sail-of-the-line were forthcoming from private yards in the years 1783-1790. Thus, by the time of the Spanish war-scare in 1790, ninety-three line-of-battle ships were ready for commission.[1] The crises of the years 1786-1788 had also been so serious that they might speedily have led to war had not Britain's first line of defence been invincible.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 111. Printed in the "Barham Papers" (ii, 219), edited by Sir John Laughton for the Navy Records Society.

In regard to the proposal to strengthen the defences of Portsmouth and Plymouth, Pitt was less fortunate. The proposal really came from the Duke of Richmond, Master of the Ordnance, who was far from popular—a fact which perhaps influenced the votes of members. Though Pitt and other Ministers adduced excellent reasons for not leaving those vital points in their present weak state, he did not carry the House of Commons with him. After an exciting debate, which lasted till 7 a.m. of 28th February 1786, the numbers on a division were found to be exactly equal. Then there arose a shout such as had not been heard since the memorable vote which wrecked Lord North's Ministry. At once all eyes turned to the Speaker, Cornwall. He declared that he was too exhausted to give his reasons for his vote, but he would merely declare that the "Noes" had it. Wraxall states that the sense of the House was against Pitt, the country gentlemen especially disliking the addition of £700,000 to the next year's expenses.[2] One of the arguments of the Opposition seems to us curious. It was urged that the fortification of the two towns in question might be the beginning of a despotic system which would undermine the liberties of Englishmen. While treating this argument with the contempt it deserved, Pitt declared that he bowed before the feeling of the House. The commencement of huge works at Cherbourg later in the year must have caused qualms even to the watch-dogs of the constitution.

Some of the more eager Whigs called out for him to resign, it being the third time in twenty-two months that he had failed to carry an important measure. We may, however, point out that the proposal emanated from the Duke of Richmond; and there is the curious fact that Courtenay during the debate of 20th March 1789 asserted that the plan was merely the Duke's, and had not come from the Royal Engineers. He was also not contradicted.[1] Further, it should be noticed that though Pitt made the proposal his own, Dundas and others of his Cabinet were known to dislike it. There is the final consideration already dwelt on, that the custom which requires a Ministry to resign on the rejection of any important measure, had not yet crystallized into a rule.

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[1] "Journals and Letters of Sir T. Byam Martin," iii, 380-2 (Navy Records Society).

[2] Wraxall, iv, 268-70. For some details on the inquiries at Portsmouth and Plymouth see the "Cornwallis Corresp.," i, 195-8.

This was the last severe check which Pitt sustained in Parliament for many years. The fact that he suffered as many as three in twenty-two months with little or no diminution of prestige shows that his majority really trusted him and had no desire to put Fox and North in power. That alternative was out of the question, as Fox knew, even when he twitted his rival with being kept in office solely by the royal favour.

Nevertheless in the years following 1785 we notice a distinct weakening in Pitt's progressive tendencies. Whig though he was in his inmost convictions, he drifted slowly but surely towards the Tory position. Fortunately for him, the folly of his rivals in the year 1784, and again in the Regency crisis of 1788-9, enabled him to link the cause of the King with that of the nation. But these occasions were exceptional. It is never safe to owe a triumph to the mistakes of opponents amidst unusual conditions. For mistakes will be made good; and in the whirl of life circumstances will arise which range men and parties according to elemental principles.

Even before the French Revolution tested the strength of Pitt's reforming convictions, there came a question which acted as a touchstone. This was the proposal to repeal the Corporation and Test Acts of the reign of Charles II. Those measures had excluded from office in Corporations, or under Government, all who would not receive the Sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England. By this ban a large body of intelligent and loyal citizens were thrust out of the pale of political and civic preferment; and though the Toleration Act and Annual Acts of Indemnity screened them from actual persecution, their position was yet one of hardship. Certain bodies had not scrupled to make money out of their conscientious objections. As is well known, the Corporation of the City of London hit upon the plan of augmenting the building fund of their new Mansion House by passing a by-law in 1748 fining any Londoner who refused to serve when presented for nomination as Sheriff, and then proposing rich Nonconformists for that office. Not until 1767 did the able pronouncement of Lord Mansfield in the Upper House secure the rejection of this odious device. Thenceforth Nonconformists secured immunity from fines for refusing to serve in offices that were barred by the test of the Sacrament.

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[1] Porter, "Hist. of the Royal Engineers," ii, 209-11. The Duke of Richmond was, however, able to fortify some points at Portsmouth before the war of 1793 with France. See "Professional Papers of the Corps of Royal Engineers," xii (1886), 83, 86. Fort Monckton and smaller forts on Stokes Bay were built.

Nevertheless their position was far from enviable. By the freaks of insular logic Protestant Dissenters were allowed to vote in parliamentary elections and even to sit in the House of Commons; but though they had a share in the making and amending of laws, they could hold no office in a Corporation, or any of the great London Companies; commissions in the army, navy, and offices in other public services were also legally closed to them. Severe penalties hung over the head of any one who, in reliance on the annual Act of Indemnity, ventured to infringe any of these singular enactments. Public opinion approved this exclusiveness; and an anecdote told of that humorous mass of intolerance, Dr. Johnson, shows that prejudice was still keen in the circles which he frequented. He, Sir Robert Chambers, and John Scott (the future Lord Eldon), were walking in the gardens of New Inn Hall at Oxford, when Chambers began picking up snails and throwing them into the next garden. Johnson sharply rebuked him for this boorish act, until there came the soothing explanation that the neighbour was a Dissenter.—"Oh," said the Doctor, "if so, Chambers, toss away, toss away as hard as you can."[1]

The choice blend of Anglicanism and culture discernible in Chambers and Johnson, might be seen elsewhere than in the seat of learning on the Isis. It was the rule in the rural districts, except among the sturdy yeomen of the Eastern Counties, where the spirit that fought at Naseby had so far survived as to render snail-throwing a pastime of doubtful expediency. The same remark applies to London, where the tactics of the city fathers had signally failed to suppress Dissent. Very many churchmen were ashamed of these petty attempts at persecution, and the progress of the Evangelical revival aroused a feeling of uneasiness at seeing the most sacred rite of the Church degraded into a political shibboleth. Comprehension within the bosom of Mother Church was highly desirable; but clearly it might be too dearly purchased by Erastian laws which enabled a lax Nonconformist to buy his way into the Customs or Excise by presenting himself at the altar of the nearest church along with convinced communicants.

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[1] H. Twiss, "Life of Lord Eldon," i, ch. iv.

Accordingly Nonconformists had a strong body of opinion on their side in the session of 1787, when they asked for the repeal of those exclusive statutes. A staunch churchman, Mr. Beaufoy, championed their cause in a very powerful and eloquent speech, which won the admiration of Wraxall.[1] Beaufoy dwelt on the anomaly of retaining this old-world exclusiveness, which would expose to the penalties of the law the illustrious John Howard, if ever he returned to this country. He showed that no danger need be apprehended for the Established Church, especially as the Act of Supremacy would continue to exclude from office all Roman Catholics, as well as Quakers. Further, the loyalty of the Protestant Dissenters had been sufficiently shown in the election of 1784, when they voted with Pitt on behalf of the prerogatives of the Crown. He then inveighed against the continuance of enactments which "degraded the altar into a qualification-desk for tax-gatherers and public extortioners." Fox followed with a strong plea for religious toleration, quoting Locke and other writers who denounced the imposition of religious tests in political matters. The Church of England, said the Whig leader, was disgraced by the present state of things; and, seeing that it represented the majority of the English people, it could not be endangered by the proposed change.

On the other hand North, now quite blind, came into the House leaning on his son, Colonel North, in order to oppose the motion. Speaking with much earnestness, he declared that the Test and Corporation Acts were the bulwarks of our Constitution. Pitt must have felt some surprise at speaking on the same side as North; but he now asserted that those Acts did not impose any stigma or penalty on Nonconformists, for whom, indeed, he had a great respect. There must be a Church Establishment, and it of necessity implied some restrictions on those outside its pale. The constitution of Society involved limitations of individual rights; and he averred that the laws in question were justified by that consideration. Further, there were no means whereby moderate Dissenters could be admitted to these privileges while the more violent were excluded. If all were admitted, they might overthrow the outworks of the Establishment. These arguments carried the day by one hundred and seventy-six votes to ninety-eight (28th March 1787).[1]

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[1] Wraxall, iv, 436.

Bishop Watson, of Llandaff, in his "Reminiscences," explains Pitt's conduct on this occasion. He declares that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had no strong feelings of his own on the subject, and had therefore referred the matter to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Primate had assembled his colleagues at Lambeth, and by ten votes to two they had decided to uphold the Caroline enactments. If this be correct, Pitt's action was weak. Certainly his speech was half-hearted, and utterly different in tone from his orations on Reform, the Regency, Slavery, and other topics which moved him deeply. Moreover, the referring a matter of this kind to the bench of bishops was about as reasonable as taking the opinion of country squires on a proposed mitigation of the Game Laws, or of college dons on a reform of their university. A Prime Minister abdicates his functions when he defers to the opinions of a class respecting a proposal which will trench on its prerogatives.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxvi, 780-832. On 8th May 1789, a similar motion by Beaufoy was defeated by 122 votes to 102 (*Ibid.*, xxviii, 1-41).

CHAPTER X

INDIA

"We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territory by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects."—(Proclamation of Queen Victoria, 1st November 1858.)

MONTAIGNE once uttered a protest against those historians who "chew the mouthfuls for us," and spoil all in the process. He coupled with it, however, another vice which is really far more serious, namely, their habit of laying down rules for judging, and "for bending history to their fancy." As for the presenting history in mouthfuls, it is probably the only way of making it digestible except for those mighty intellects which seize facts and figures with avidity, and assimilate them as if by magic.

Further, the modern historian may urge in defence of the topical method that it is the only practicable way of dealing with the infinity of topics of the last two centuries, ranging over parliamentary debates and wars, finance and social gossip, mean intrigues and philanthropic movements, industrial changes and empire-building, the efforts of great men and the impersonal forces that mould and move great nations, together with the denuding agencies that weather away the old surface and the resistless powers that thrust up a new world. How shall a finite intellect grasp at once all the moving details of this varied life? The mind craves to consider at any one time only one part of the majestic procession, just as it demands that the facts of Nature shall be grasped under different sciences. Human life is one as Nature is one; but the division in each case is necessitated by the increasing width of man's outlook. All that is essential in the sorting-out process is that it shall honestly set forth all the important facts, and here and there open out vistas revealing the connection with other fields of human activity. In short, history can no longer be a detailed panorama of life, but it can and ought to be a series of companion pictures, informed by the personality of the artist and devoid of conscious prejudice.

Among the diverse subjects which confront us in the many-sided career of Pitt, none stands more apart than that of his relations to India. Of his Herculean labours we may, perhaps, term this one the cleansing of the Augean stables. The corruption that clung about the Indian Government, the baffling remoteness of its duties, the singular relations of the East India Company to the Crown, and of its own officials to it, above all, the storms of passion which had been aroused by the masterful dealings of Warren Hastings and the furious invectives of Burke, presented a problem which could not be solved save by the exercise of insight, patience, and wise forcefulness. It would greatly overburden this narrative to recount the signal services, albeit marred by deeds of severity and injustice, whereby Hastings grappled with the Mahratta War and the incursion of Hyder Ali into the Carnatic. All that need be remembered here is that Parliament had censured some of his actions and demanded his recall, that the Court of Directors of the Company had endorsed that demand, but that the Court of Proprietors had annulled it. Hastings therefore remained at his post, mainly, it would appear, from a conviction that he alone could safeguard British supremacy.

Accordingly, on this all-important question there was division in the executive powers at Calcutta, and in the East India Company itself; while the insubordination of very many of the Company's servants in India further revealed the insufficiency of Lord North's Regulating Act of 1773. Fortunately, however, the finances of the Company were in such disorder as to make it amenable to pressure from Westminster. It owed a very large sum to the Home Government for duties on its imports into Great Britain; and Parliament was thus the better able to assert the supremacy of the nation.

It was high time to make good this claim. The India Bills of Fox and of Pitt had been thrown out; and thus, despite an infinity of talk, the whole situation remained unchanged, except that nearly every one now agreed that it must be changed. On questions of detail opinions differed widely. Some of the proprietors and Directors of the Company protested against any interference whatsoever with chartered rights which they were perfectly able to uphold and vindicate. The opposite extreme was touched by Fox during a preliminary debate on the affairs of the Company, when he declared that body to be a sink of corruption and iniquity, a mere conduit for bringing home the wealth acquired by its servants in India. If, said he, the patronage of the India service must be vested either in the Directors or in the Crown, let the Crown take that influence from hands which had so shamefully abused it.

Pitt's position, it soon appeared, was intermediate between these extremes. Four days later, on 6th July 1784, he introduced his second India Bill in a speech marked by great circumspection. He started from the same principles which had fashioned the outlines of his former measure (see chapter vii), that, though a charter ought not to override the needs of the State, yet nothing but absolute necessity could justify its abrogation. The affairs of the Company, he claimed, did not warrant so extreme a measure. His aim would be, not to abolish, but improve on, the existing plan of government for India. There were two essentials to be aimed at, namely, a due share of activity and resourcefulness in the Indian Government and obedience to the measures dictated by Parliament. The former of these requisites could be attained only by according to the Indian Government a certain degree of power, and from the latter it resulted that that power must be subject to the control of a regulating Board at home.

Pitt therefore recurred to his former plan. He left to the Governments of the Presidencies, above all, to the Governor-General, enough authority to enable them to cope with emergencies; but he also proposed to subject them to a Board consisting of members chosen by the Crown from the Privy Council. To this special committee of the Privy Council would be entrusted the power of devising legislation for India, of controlling Indian policy, and of recalling any of the Company's officials. It was not, however, to have a voice in those questions of patronage which might deflect it from the path of duty and impartiality. The proceedings of the Board might be open to perusal by the Directors of the Company; but its behests would be final. In case of flagrant disobedience, or of other grave offences, the officials and servants of the Company were to be tried by a Commission consisting of members of the two Houses of Parliament chosen by ballot shortly before the trial.

Such were the chief proposals. As for the spirit which informed the measures, it may be divined from that part of the speech in which the Prime Minister set forth the fundamental principles of our Indian policy. They were in brief these, the avoidance of war and of alliances that might lead to war, and the use of such conciliatory methods as would further the aim which we had chiefly in view—pacific commerce.[1]

Neither the spirit of enlightened patriotism, which pervaded the speech, nor the practical nature of the proposals screened the measure from fierce opposition. That acrid opponent of Warren Hastings, Mr. Francis, taunted Pitt with leaving to the Directors of the Company the mere shadow of authority, but he prophesied that the large powers vested in the Governor-General and in the Governments of the Presidencies would be abused as flagrantly as ever they had been in the past. Fox expanded these objections with his usual force, asserting that far too large powers were given to the Crown, and that the proposed Board would be quite as partisan a body as the Commissioners to whom he in his India Bill had entrusted the regulating power. He further insisted that to leave appointments to the Company, while depriving it of authority, was a miserably weak expedient which must sap the base of government. On their side, the Directors of the Company complained that the present Bill at several points trenched on their trading rights, which they had always expressly reserved to themselves; and they urged that they must retain in their own hands the right of recalling their own servants. As for the proposed tribunal for the trial of disobedient officials, it seemed to them an unsatisfactory experiment, seeing that both trial by jury and impeachment were ill adapted to the complex questions of Indian administration.[2]

Nevertheless, the Company had to give way at nearly all points. The powers of the Court of Proprietors almost entirely lapsed (to the satisfaction of all but themselves); and a clause was passed, compelling the Company's officials to state on oath the amount of their fortunes at the end of their service, Pitt himself suggesting that private gains up to £2,000 a year after the first five years of service should not be deemed culpable. Though the Bill prohibited the receiving of "presents" from natives, it was clear that officials would use other equally objectionable means in order to arrive at that unobjectionable sum.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiv, 1086-99.

[2] Pitt MSS., 353.

On the whole, however, the principle of controlling Indian affairs from Westminster, which Lord North had rather haltingly asserted eleven years earlier, now became the dominant fact of the situation. This will be clear if we review the constitution and powers of the new Board of Control. It was to consist of six members of the Privy Council chosen by the King; the Chancellor of the Exchequer and one of the Secretaries of State being always included. In the absence of these two, the senior member of the remaining four was to preside; and finally the conduct of the Board's affairs came to rest virtually with him, so that he became, in all but name, Secretary of State for India. For the present, however, as appears from a letter of Dundas to Cornwallis of 29th July 1787, Pitt attended the Board regularly and thoroughly mastered its business.

To this Board were submitted all letters and despatches between the Company and its officials in India, except those which referred solely to trade. Every proceeding and resolution of the Court of Directors must come to it; and from it there issued orders which the Directors were bound to enforce. Further, at the second reading Pitt amended his Bill so as to allow the Board in urgent cases to frame and transmit their commands to India without communicating them to the Directors. Finally, if the Company appealed against the Board's decisions, the ultimate judgement lay with the King in Council, that is, with a body largely the same as that from which it appealed.[1] While, therefore, Pitt instituted what was called a system of dual control, that control, save in the lower sphere of commerce, was really exercised by the Home Government. In the long series of changes which transformed the venture of a company of London merchants into an Empire administered by the British people, no step is more important than that taken by him in this, his first great constructive effort.

But this was not all. Various circumstances in the next eighteen months showed the need of still further strengthening the Indian executive. Certain ominous moves of the French caused anxiety. In the spring of 1785 their East India Company was revived on an imposing scale; and the close relations subsisting between France and the Dutch Republic augured ill for the British dominions in the Orient. Everything, therefore. tended to emphasize the need of strong Government at Calcutta; and the attention directed to Indian affairs consequent on the charges brought against Warren Hastings early in the year 1786, further convinced many competent judges of the need of strengthening the Indian executive. These considerations furnish the reasons which led Pitt to bring in an Amending Act.

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[1] Mill, "Hist. of British India," iv, 559 (4th edit.).

If we may judge from Pitt's speeches of 17th and 22nd March of that year, he had been much impressed by the sagacity of the Governor-General in seeking to frame an alliance with the Great Mogul for the purpose of counterbalancing the offensive league of Tippoo Sahib with the French. The action of Hastings' Council in frustrating this statesmanlike plan, because it contravened the instructions of the Company, showed the unwisdom of doubly tying the hands of a competent governor, first by instructions drawn up in Leadenhall Street, and secondly by a Council in which pedantry or personal spite could paralyze great enterprises. Obviously what was required was to choose the right man as Governor-General, then to grant him powers large enough to meet serious crises, and to place him in such a relation to the Home Government that those powers would not be abused. None of these conditions could be satisfied so long as the Company appointed the supreme officials and prescribed their functions.

But Pitt's Bill of 1784 had changed all this. As we have seen, the British Government was now the driving force of the Indian machinery, the Company acting merely as an intermediate wheel. The responsibility of the Governor-General to the new India Board and to Parliament having been decisively asserted, his powers could now safely be increased.

This formed the *raison d'être* of Pitt's Amending Act of March 1786. Though introduced by Dundas—a graceful compliment to his exertions in Indian matters in time past—it emanated from the Prime Minister. It applied the principles of the India Bill of 1784 to the servants of the Company in Great Britain. But, what was far more important, it enabled the Governor-General to override the opinions of his Council at Calcutta, the members thenceforth merely recording in writing their protests or the grounds of their opposition. The like powers were also conferred on the Governors of Madras and Bombay. Finally, the Governor-General was empowered to fill up any vacancy in the Council occasioned by death, and was also to act as Commander-in-Chief.

These far-reaching proposals caused Burke's spleen to overflow. He burst forth into a violent diatribe against this "raw-head and bloody bones Bill." Pitt's first India Bill, he declared, was an abortion of tyranny, an imperfect foetus in a bottle, to be handed about as a show, but hypocrisy had nursed it till now the full-grown monster was before them.

> And at his heels,
> Leash'd in like hounds, shall famine, sword, and fire
> Crouch for employment.

It was absurd, he said, to expect energy and despatch from a despotism like that about to be set up in India. Democracy owed most of its triumphs to the openness and strength of its operations. The joint experience of many must prevail over the fallible judgements even of the best mind on earth. After this outburst, which Burke must have regretfully recalled when he undertook his crusade against French democracy, Fox emptied the vials of his wrath on the measure, especially taunting Pitt with robbing the Council at Calcutta of all administrative functions. This was not surprising, he said, as the Minister so obviously preferred speech to action. His speeches were splendid, his actions presented a long record of failure. "Let others act, the honourable gentleman desired only to argue." Pitt wisely declined to notice heated personalities, and limited his speech to the task of proving that the Bill cured several of the weaknesses of the Indian Government, and met the needs of the situation. This reply, quiet, dignified, and practical, carried the House with him by a majority of eighty-nine. The Bill passed the third reading without a division on 27th March. Such was Pitt's retort to the windy declamation of his opponents.

Thus was completed the fabric begun two years before. Thenceforth the Governor-General wielded a concentrated power such as India had not known since the decline of the Moguls. No longer could he be thwarted by the members of his own Council as Warren Hastings had often been by the intrigues of Monson and Francis. In truth the Viceroyalty was now an autocracy such as orientals could understand and respect. But this autocracy was, after all, local and conditional—a fact which Burke overlooked or ignored. While wielding despotic authority in India, the new Viceroy was but an adjunct of the British constitutional machine. It is perhaps the highest of Pitt's achievements that he saw how to combine two ideals of Government, the oriental and the occidental, in a way that conduced to vigour of action in Bengal, and did not impair popular progress at home. While investing the real ruler of India with powers far greater than those wielded by Warren Hastings, he subordinated them to the will of King and Parliament.

It has been asserted that Pitt was weak as a legislator.[1] It will be well to notice this charge at the close of these volumes. But surely, when judged by all conceivable standards, his India Bills must take rank amongst the greatest of legislative achievements. For by those measures, Pitt subordinated the most powerful of all Companies to the British Parliament. By it, as we have seen, he harmonized the claims of a viceregal autocracy in the Orient with those of popular government at home; and he thereby saved the British Empire from the fate which befell that of Rome. Historians of the Roman Republic agree that the favourites of the Senate of the type of Verres who were let loose on the provinces beyond the sea, not only proved the most frightful scourge to the subject peoples, but also undermined popular liberty at home by the unscrupulous use of their plundered hoards. The same system palsied the limbs of that Empire and drugged its brain. Whether the "nabobs" who rolled off from India and settled down in England would finally have exerted this doubly baleful influence, it is futile to inquire; but, had they gorged and bribed for several generations, the results must have been serious among a people that look on politics from a very practical standpoint.

On the other hand, to have run amok at that class, like Burke, might have yielded them the ultimate victory. Pitt observed the golden mean. For the present, the Company hailed him as its champion. But, while saving it from the Quixotic crusader, he bound it and its servants by strong ties, which it was found easy to tighten at every renewal of the Charter. Above all he strengthened the hands of the Viceroy even while binding him more closely to the Home Government. Has any other statesman succeeded in the task of linking an oriental autocracy with the ancient parliamentary system of a Teutonic race?

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[1] Lord Acton, "Letters to Mary Gladstone," 45.

The first of the parliamentary Governors-General was the man whom Pitt early in 1784 designed for the equally difficult post of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. In the summer of that year, as also early in 1785, he urged Earl Cornwallis to combine the functions of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of India; but the earl at that time declined, partly because the powers of the Commander-in-Chief were unduly restricted.[1] The high hopes which Dundas had long entertained of the abilities of Cornwallis, shown by his desire to offer to him the Viceroyalty in 1782, now led the Ministry to meet his objections by introducing the Amending Act for extending the powers of the Governor-General in cases of emergency.[2] Cornwallis accordingly accepted office; and in the seven years of his Viceroyalty (1786-1793) British rule was so far strengthened as to withstand the attacks of the Mahrattas and the far-reaching combinations of Bonaparte.

The same year which saw the dawn of a new era for India, witnessed also the impeachment of Warren Hastings. We are not concerned here with the series of events which provided material for that longest and most famous of our State trials. What does concern us is the behaviour of Pitt in what was perhaps the most complex problem confronted in his early manhood. Seeing that he was chiefly responsible for the vote in the House of Commons which made impeachment inevitable, this part of the question cannot be passed by. Difficult though it is to separate one of the charges brought by Burke and Fox against Hastings from the others, yet limits of space compel us to restrict our survey to that one which induced Pitt to vote for the impeachment. It related to Hastings' treatment of Cheyt Singh, the Zamindar (not quite correctly termed the Rajah) of Benares.

The reader is doubtless aware that Hastings' tenure of the Governorship of Bengal in and after the year 1772 coincided with a period of exceptional difficulty, which was enhanced by the acrid and often underhand opposition of Francis, Clavering, and Monson in the Governing Council at Calcutta. Further, the

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[1] "Cornwallis Correspondence," i, 180, 191.

[2] *Ibid.*, 220, 221.

East India Company was often on the verge of bankruptcy Undoubtedly the perpetual want of money led Hastings to the most questionable of his enterprises, the letting out of the Company's troops to the Rajah of Oude for the purpose of driving out or subjecting the Rohillas, a race of freebooters on his north-western borders. But difficulties thickened with the outbreak of the war with the Mahrattas and the French. The climax came in 1780 when Hyder Ali, the usurper of Mysore, let loose his hordes upon the Carnatic, and threatened to sweep the British into the sea. Then it was that the genius of Hastings awoke to full strength. He strained every nerve to send from the Hooghly a large force of troops to the relief of the despairing settlement at Madras; and, money being an essential, he cast about for all means of finding it without wholly depleting the exchequer of the embarrassed Company. Among other devices he pressed one of his feudatories, Cheyt Singh, Zamindar of Benares, for a sum of £50,000 in addition to the annual tribute. Seeing that the British held the paramountcy in India, and therefore enjoyed the right of calling on the vassal princes for help in time of emergency, the claim was reasonable, especially as Cheyt Singh's father owed his position to the East India Company. After giving extra assistance in each of the years 1778-80, Cheyt Singh began to grow restive in 1780 when the demand was renewed, and showed signs of disloyalty. Hastings thereupon imposed a fine of £500,000. More than this, he went to Benares in person, hoping to browbeat the Zamindar; but, his following being scanty, the troops of the latter rose against him, and cooped him up in his residence. With the splendid coolness which never deserted him, he manfully faced the danger. Secretly he sent warning to some of the Company's forces not far distant, and British valour rescued him from his desperate plight. An Englishman in resolution, Hastings was an oriental in his methods of punishment and revenge. Forthwith he deposed Cheyt Singh, and set in his place another Zamindar with a much enhanced tribute (September 1781).

The same plea of overmastering necessity impelled him to interfere in the affairs of Oude, an episode which, when tricked out in the gorgeous rhetoric of Burke and Sheridan, shocked the conscience of the British people. Sheridan's oration on "The Spoliation of the Begums of Oude" is perhaps the most thrilling Philippic of the modern world; but its force is sensibly lessened when we know that Burke derived his version of facts from a poisoned source. Francis, the bitter enemy of Warren Hastings, had been worsted by that master-mind in the Council-chamber at Calcutta; and, on challenging him to a duel, had been wounded in fair fight. It was this man, beaten twice over, who in 1781 returned to England to brood over means of revenge, and found them incarnate in Burke.

The genius which enabled that great Irishman to pour out serene and soul-satisfying judgements on the affairs of nations was allied with a more than feminine sensitiveness that often left him at the mercy of first impressions and Quixotic impulses. On all points of honour, whether personal or national, his chivalrous nature carried him to extremes bordering on the fantastic. The two incidents recounted above kindled in him a passion of indignation, which cooled but slowly, even when hatred of the French Revolution obsessed him. All attempts to ascribe Burke's crusade against Hastings to partisanship or personal spite have egregiously failed. As Macaulay has shown in his brilliant but untrustworthy essay on Warren Hastings, Burke's opposition to Hastings began in 1781, survived the kaleidoscopic changes of the next decade, and lived on into the new world of the Revolutionary Era. Clearly it resulted from a profound difference of view on Indian affairs. Even to-day, when the justificatory facts of Hastings' career are well known, his actions are wholly condemned by men of a similar bent of mind. On the other hand his policy appears statesmanlike to those who look first at the wealth of benefits conferred on India by the British Raj and pay little heed to miscarriages of justice which they regard as incidental to an alien administration. The Hastings episode will ever range in hostile groups men of strongly marked dispositions; while the judicial minority will feel themselves drawn perplexingly first to the sentimental side and then to the practical side as new facts and considerations emerge from the welter of evidence.

From midsummer 1785, when Hastings landed at Plymouth and repaired to the Court at Windsor, England was rent asunder by these prepossessions. The King, as might be expected, received him with marked favour; but it caused some surprise that Queen Charlotte, who was propriety personified, should affably receive his wife, the *divorcée* of a complaisant Baron Imhoff. For a time it seemed that Hastings could afford to scorn the efforts of his opponents. Burke had given notice of a hostile motion in the House of Commons; but, in the then discredited state of the Opposition, it was unlikely to pass. Ministers for the most part approved the conduct of Hastings. Pitt also is said to have been favourably impressed by an interview which they had towards the end of June. Unfortunately no account survives of what must have been a memorable meeting. Hastings was then fifty-two years of age, exactly double the span of life passed by the Prime Minister. But the young statesman had by instinct the same faculty of controlling his feelings under a calm exterior which the Governor-General had perfected during years of vindictive opposition at Calcutta. The countenance of each was thin and worn by the workings of a too active brain, reminding the beholder of the noble lines of Milton:

> Deep on his front engraven
> Deliberation sat and public care;
> And princely counsel in his face yet shone
> Majestic.

Undoubtedly they were then the ablest men of action of our race; and, despite envious surmises to the contrary, we may be sure that Pitt looked with admiration on the placid intellectual features of the man whose gigantic toil had saved British India. Both of them had the power of throwing off the cares of state and of indulging in playful intercourse with friends;[1] and charm of manner and conversation must have enlivened the interview.

Yet each was closely on his guard. The opposition of Dundas to Hastings (for he it was who moved the vote of censure on him in May 1782) must have coloured Pitt's feelings; and Hastings, as we know, believed that the India Bill of 1784 was a veiled attack upon himself. The interview certainly did not reassure him; for he thenceforth informed his friends that he could not depend on the support of Pitt.[2] The doubts were strengthened by the omission of the honours that so distinguished a man might have expected; but this fact was attributable to the motion of censure of which Burke had given notice in the House.

Thus Pitt maintained a cautious reserve. To say that he was waiting to see which way the wind would blow is manifestly unjust. He was awaiting further information in what was a most complicated case. We know that he sent to Hastings for an explanation of the terms of a zamindar's tenure of office, evidently in order to clear up some of the questions respecting the Zamindar of Benares.[1] Thus, while Lansdowne, Mansfield, and Thurlow loudly proclaimed their confidence in Hastings; while the King continued to converse with him most affably at the *levées*, and Queen Charlotte accepted a splendid ivory bedstead presented by his wife, Pitt remained guardedly neutral.

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[1] Wraxall, iv, 142-4.

[2] Malleson, "Life of Warren Hastings" (1894), 456.

Many members of the Opposition wished to let the motion of censure drop, and urged this at a private meeting held at the Duke of Portland's residence shortly before the meeting of Parliament in January 1786. But the zeal of Burke and Fox had not cooled with time. Further, on the first day of the session they were pointedly challenged by Major Scott, the accredited agent of Hastings in the House. At best Scott was a poor champion. Verbose, tedious, and ever harping on the same theme, he wearied the House with the wrongs of Hastings before they came officially before it; and on the first day of the great trial Fanny Burney remarked: "What a pity that Mr. Hastings should have trusted his cause to so frivolous an agent! I believe—and indeed it is the general belief, both of friends and foes—that to his officious and injudicious zeal the present prosecution is wholly owing."[2]

Yet Scott would scarcely have flung down the gauntlet without the knowledge and consent of his patron. Indeed on all grounds it is probable that Hastings, with his customary daring, preferred that the question should come to the clear light of a trial rather than swell with the accretions of gossip and dark innuendoes.[3] We must also remember that until the vote of censure of 28th May 1782 was removed from the journals of the House his name was under a cloud; and now that the accusations of Burke and Francis hurtled more thickly through the air, the whole matter was bound to come to the arbitrament of the law or of pistols.

On Hastings and Scott, then, rests the responsibility for renewing the strife. While they thus rashly opened the game, Burke replied on 17th February 1786 by a move of unusual skill. He requested that the Clerk of the House should read Dundas's resolutions of censure of May 1782, and then ironically suggested that that gentleman, formerly the president of the special committee of the House, was the man who now ought to take action against the ex-Viceroy. He himself was but a humble member of that committee, and he now looked, but in vain, to those in power to give effect to the earlier resolutions. "But I perceive," he said, with his eyes on Pitt, "that any operations by which the three per cents may be raised in value affect Ministers more deeply than the violated rights of millions of the human race."[1] Dundas, never an effective speaker, failed to wriggle away from the charge of inconsistency thus pointedly driven home. The attitude of Pitt was calm and dignified. In the course of the adjourned debate he professed his neutrality on the question. While commending Burke for the moderation with which he then urged his demands, he admitted that the charges brought against Hastings ought to be investigated and his guilt or innocence proved by incontestable evidence. "I am," he said, "neither a determined friend nor foe of Mr. Hastings, but I will support the principles of justice and equity. I recommend a calm dispassionate investigation, leaving every man to follow the impulse of his own mind."[2]

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[1] Malleson, "Life of Warren Hastings" (1894), 455.

[2] Wraxall, iv, 250; "Diary of Mme. d'Arblay," iv, 60 (edit. 1854).

[3] Malleson, *op. cit.*, 449.

This declaration of neutrality, the import of which will appeai in the sequel, did not imply that there was to be no investigation. The challenge having been thrown down, the tournament was bound to proceed. Thenceforth Pitt confined himself to the functions of arbiter. Burke now enlarged his motion so as to include all the official correspondence respecting Oude, whereupon the Minister urged him always to state his reasons for the production of documents, and not to expect those which revealed any secret policy. Burke said he was ready to specify his charges, and he did so. He further said that he was in possession of abundant evidence to make good those charges. On his applying for certain confidential papers, Pitt opposed the motion; but he agreed to sixteen other motions for papers. In face of these facts, how can the panegyrists of Warren Hastings claim that Pitt objected to Burke's procedure and carried a motion against it?[3] Burke's motions were agreed to without a division, the Prime Minister having merely given an obviously necessary veto in the case of confidential documents.

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[1] Wraxall, iv, 260.

[2] *Ibid.*, 261; "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 1094-5.

[3] *E.g.*, Malleson, *op. cit.*, 450.

In view of the charges of gross inconsistency that have been brought against Pitt on the Hastings trial, it will be well to look into details somewhat closely. On 3rd March 1786 Burke returned to the charge by pressing for the communication of papers respecting the recent peace with the Mahrattas and cognate subjects. At once Dundas and Pitt objected, on the ground that very many of those documents were of the most confidential character, revealing, as they did, the secret means whereby the Mahratta confederacy was dissolved. In the course of his speech Pitt declared that Hastings had made that peace "with an address and ingenuity that did him immortal honour." But he added that other charges against him might be substantiated. In vain did Fox and Burke protest against the withholding of documents bearing on the present topic. The sense of the House was against them. Wilberforce applauded the caution of Ministers, as did eighty-seven members against forty-four on a division. A similar motion by the accusers for the production of papers relative to Delhi met with the same fate three days later.

On Fox renewing his demand for the Delhi papers (17th March), Pitt took occasion to state his views clearly. If State papers were called for in order to set on foot a criminal prosecution, he required the mover to "show a probable ground of guilt," and secondly, that the papers were necessary to substantiate that guilt; the third condition was that the public service would not suffer by publication.[1] He then proceeded to prove that the action of Hastings in seeking to form an alliance with the Great Mogul (despite the orders of the Company) was timely and statesmanlike, as it promised to thwart the alluring offers of Tippoo Sahib and the French to that potentate. Finally he asserted that, if he could reveal the Delhi correspondence to the House, all members would see how improper its publication would be. For his own ease and for the reputation of Hastings, which would be enhanced by such a step, he could wish to give it to the world, especially as all the documents hitherto granted were hostile to the ex-Viceroy; but in the interests of the country he must oppose the demand of the prosecutors for the

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 1256.

Delhi papers. In spite of the slap-dash assertions of Sheridan that the contents of those papers were perfectly well known, the House upheld Pitt's decision by 140 votes to 73.[1]

The next move of the prosecutors was to demand the presence of certain witnesses at the bar of the House. The Master of the Rolls objected on points of form, and also protested against the appearance of pamphlets hostile to Hastings which had been industriously circulated among the members of both Houses. Burke then admitted that most of the State Papers asked for had been granted, though some had been denied, but acridly complained that Ministers were now trying to quash the prosecution. Pitt did not speak.[2] On 26th April Burke brought forward two more charges, whereupon Pitt remarked that they contained much criminal matter, but he had formed no opinion as to their correctness; he hoped that it would appear otherwise, but the House must examine them with the utmost impartiality. Fox having taunted him with pretending to see no guilt where he saw too much, Pitt deprecated such outbursts. Later in the debate he demurred to the examination of witnesses called by the prosecutors before Hastings himself had been heard at the bar. Justice, he said, demanded that the accused should have a hearing before the accusers substantiated their case. He also declared that he would not consent to the examination of witnesses, still less to vote the impeachment of Hastings, on the vague and indefinite charges as yet before the House. Wilberforce expressed the hope that the Minister would persevere in the steady path he had pursued and would not be driven from it by the intemperate attacks of opponents. Burke inveighed against Pitt's decision; but the latter carried the day by 139 votes to 80.

It was therefore by Pitt's action that Hastings procured a hearing in the House—an opportunity which, if tactfully used, might have disconcerted his accusers. But the opportunity was lost. Instead of making a telling speech, Hastings proceeded to read a long and laboured reply, which occupied all the sittings of 1st and 2nd May, and emptied the House. Members accustomed to the faultless oratory of Pitt and the debating vigour of Fox, yawned at the dreary recital of remote events of which they knew little and cared less. Accordingly, it was with enhanced hope of success that Burke, after a month of careful preparation, brought forward his charges respecting the Rohilla War. On 13th June he introduced them. On the former of them Grenville defended the conduct of Hastings on the ground that the Rohillas had by their raids provoked the war, and that it was well to remove them. Dundas censured the Rohilla War, but maintained that, while the Governor-General should have been recalled for it twelve years ago, there was no ground for impeaching him for it now, especially as in the interval Parliament had three times named him Governor-General. Wilberforce, whose opinion weighed much with Pitt, took the same view. The most significant speech of the defence was that of Wilbraham who, on behalf of Hastings' honour, urged the House to refer the charges to the House of Lords, where alone a full acquittal could be pronounced.[1] Pitt spoke only on a small technical point, but voted with Grenville and Dundas. Despite a long and powerful speech by Fox, the House sided with what seemed to be the ministerial view, and at half-past seven in the morning of 3rd June rejected Burke's motion by 119 votes to 67.

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[1] The debate of 26th April seems to show that Burke was acquainted with the substance of those papers.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 1384-94.

Undaunted by this further rebuff, Fox, on 13th June, very ably brought up the charge relating to the treatment of Cheyt Singh, Zamindar of Benares.[2] He allowed that the continuance of Hastings in power twelve years after the Rohilla War seemed to imply that Parliament had condoned that offence; but this plea could not be urged respecting the Benares affair of 1781. He showed that the Company had agreed to respect the independence of the Zamindar of Benares, and that Hastings had pressed on him remorselessly for aids in money and cavalry, and had finally mulcted the exhausted prince of half a million sterling. The fate of Bengal, he claimed, depended on their condemnation of so tyrannical a proceeding.

All eyes were turned on Pitt as he rose to state his views on this question; and Wraxall avers that never did the range of his faculties appear greater, his marshalling of facts more lucid, or his elocution more easy and graceful. This is the more remarkable as the young Minister avowed his desire on personal grounds to absent himself from the discussion of so complex and remote a problem. We also know from his letter of 10th June to Eden, that he had "hardly hours enough to read all the papers on that voluminous article" (the Benares charge).[1] It is therefore clear that he formed his judgement within a very short time of his speech. In this, however, he soon showed that he had probed the intricacies of the question. Setting forth in detail the terms of a zamindar's tenure, he disproved Fox's contention that the Company had no right to exact an "aid" from an "independent rajah." He demurred to the epithet "independent," at least as regarded the supreme power in India. The suzerain power has as good a right in time of crisis to exact "aids" from its feudatories as any Suzerain in Europe from his feudal dependents. Next he crushed Francis by citing his own written opinion that extraordinary demands might be exacted from such feudatories. Having set forth the question in its true light, and exposed the inconsistency and malice of Francis, he approached the crux of the whole problem, whether the fine ultimately exacted from Cheyt Singh was not excessive. Here he objected to the drawing of precedents solely from the days of the Indian Emperors. It was the duty of every British administrator to behave according to the rules of justice and liberty; and, said he, "On this ground I feel it impossible to acquit Mr. Hastings of the whole of the charge brought against him; for I feel in my conscience that he has pushed the exercise of that arbitrary discretion which, from the nature of the Eastern Government, was intrusted to him to a greater length than he was warranted to do by the necessity of the service." While justified in imposing a penalty, he continued, Hastings had not proportioned the punishment to the guilt. In fining Cheyt Singh £500,000 for a mere delay to pay £50,000 (which £50,000 in the last instance was actually paid) Hastings had "proceeded in an arbitrary tyrannical manner." As to the restoration of Cheyt Singh to his possessions, it was beset by certain difficulties, and he preferred for the present to withhold his opinion.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxvi, 37-90.

[2] "Zamindar" means no more than landowner. Hastings had confirmed Cheyt Singh in his powers. Sir Alfred Lyall and Mr. G. W. Hastings in their works on Warren Hastings lay stress on the fact that Cheyt Singh was a *parvenu*, not one of the old hereditary princes of India. I fail to see that this has any bearing on the justice or injustice of Hastings' treatment of him.

That speech led to the impeachment of Warren Hastings for though Grenville, Lord Mulgrave, and the Attorney-General (Pepper Arden) spoke against the Prime Minister, the judgement of the last named prevailed; the House endorsed it by 119 votes to 79, or about the same numbers as had rejected the previous charge. The conduct of Pitt on this occasion has been vehemently assailed. Wraxall, writing many years later, maintained that it was a sudden and unaccountable change of front; and he further suggested that the jealousy which was said to be felt by Dundas for the superior abilities of Hastings might have influenced Pitt's action.

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[1] "Auckland Journals," i, 127.

As the insinuation has been endlessly repeated, I may be pardoned for dwelling on it somewhat fully. The story has been tricked out with a wealth of details. It is asserted that Pitt issued a Treasury circular calling for the attendance of his supporters on the 13th of June, as if it were for the defence of Hastings. No proof of this statement has ever been given; and there are good grounds for disbelieving it. In the first place it should be remembered that attendance at the House had been greatly thinned by the Whitsuntide holidays. The vacation was just over; and, as everyone acquainted with Parliament ought to know, a full House was hardly to be expected at the first sitting afterwards. Pitt's letter of 10th June to Eden contains the following sentence. After stating that there had recently been a short and languid debate, and a division of seventy-one to thirty-three, he continues: "We shall probably have some attendance next Tuesday when Mr. Fox moves the charge respecting Benares; and after that our chief difficulty will be to get a House for the next fortnight. In the meantime I have hardly hours enough to read all the papers necessary on that voluminous article."[1]

These are not the words of a man who is about to perform an act of treachery. It is clear that Pitt found great difficulty in getting through the evidence on that charge before the debate came on; and further, that he was doing his duty as leader of the House in trying to assure as good an attendance as the holiday season permitted on a charge of this importance. Wraxall, who here opposed Pitt, makes no mention of any ministerial "whip" in favour of Hastings, as he would certainly have done if he could thereby have strengthened his case against him. The fact that neither he nor Tomline refers to the calumny proves the lateness of its origin. Further, if a special "whip" had been sent out for the support of Hastings, would not some of the ex-Viceroy's friends, especially Major Scott, have exposed the fraud? But no reference to it is to be found in the report of that debate. Are we also to suppose that the forty or fifty members who changed sides with Pitt, would have gone over to the accusers if he had been guilty of such duplicity? Finally, it is clear from the remarks of Grenville, Mulgrave, and Pepper Arden, that even the colleagues of Pitt felt perfectly free to vote as they chose. Mulgrave declared that the Prime Minister would not be fit to remain in office a single day if he expected his friends and associates to give up their opinions on this subject. Pitt, as we have seen, had at the outset called on members to exercise their impartiality; and he now assented to Mulgrave's statement.[1] The story that Pitt sent round a "whip" for the support of Hastings, and then drove his followers like sheep into the opposite lobby, may therefore be dismissed as a malicious fiction, at variance with all the known facts of the case.

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[1] "Auckland Correspondence," i, 127; Wraxall, iv, 336.

Then again it is stated by Lord Campbell in his sketch of the life of Lord Eldon,[2] that Pitt mysteriously abandoned Hastings, "and—contrary to the wish of Lord Thurlow who had a scheme for making Hastings a peer, perhaps a Minister—gave him up to impeachment." The charge is made in a very loose way; but on it the detractors of Pitt have built a theory that Dundas and he feared the advent of Hastings to the India Board, or to the Ministry, or to the House of Lords. This story has been varied and amplified, so that in one version George III appears as desirous of forcing him into the Cabinet, or granting him a peerage on the sole recommendation of Thurlow. But the letter which the King wrote to Pitt on 14th June shows that, while regretting his action concerning Hastings, he respected his conscientiousness, and harboured no thought of breaking with him.[3] That Thurlow had boasted of his power to further the interests of Hastings is likely enough; but it is certain that the King never thought of thrusting the ex-Viceroy into the Cabinet, or the India Board of Control, or of raising him to the House of Lords without the approval of his Prime Minister. The King's letters to Pitt[1] show that his chief desire then was to meet the large and growing expenses of his family; and Pitt's economic policy made his continuance in power at that time especially desirable. Royal condescension towards Hastings set all tongues wagging; and they have wagged ever since on the malignant jealousy of Dundas, and the gross inconsistency of Pitt; but the proofs adduced are of the flimsiest character. Wraxall and Bland Burges, who later on jotted down their impressions of parliamentary life, asserted that Dundas had somehow become convinced that the King intended to eject him from the India Board of Control and put Hastings in his place. But neither of them gave any proof. Wraxall merely stated that "the public believed" that Dundas feared such a change.[2] Bland Burges averred that Dundas had "by some means" come to know the secret intention of the King, and therefore "sedulously fanned Mr. Pitt's jealousy and uneasiness and so alarmed his mind that he hurried him on to a decision before he had time to satisfy himself as to its justice or expediency."[3]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxvi, 115.

[2] "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," ix, 175 (4th edit.). The words quoted above furnish no ground for the assertion of Sir H. Lyall in his "Warren Hastings" that Pitt heard news of Thurlow's boast just before the debate of 13th June. Campbell's words are quite vague, and are entitled to little credence.

[3] Stanhope, i, App., xix.

Equally unconvincing is the story, which Hastings himself told some thirty years later, that on the morning of 13th June Dundas called on Pitt, remained closeted with him for some hours, and convinced him that they must abandon the ex-Viceroy. The insinuation conveyed in this belated anecdote is that Pitt was then and there won over by Dundas, and owing to the mean motives mentioned above. The ingrained tendency of men to seek for petty personal pretexts rather than larger, more generous, and more obvious causes, seems to be the *raison d'être* of the story and of its perpetuation. There are also some natures so warped by partisanship that they naturally refer actions of political opponents to discreditable motives; and it is a sign of the bias which detracts from the value of Macaulay's "Warren Hastings," that he did not mention the late date at which the story was started, while he gives it as an historic fact that Pitt's change of front was "the result of this conference."

No statement of what went on at this alleged interview has ever been forthcoming; but, fortunately, on the all important question of motive, we have the clear testimony of one who knew Pitt most intimately, and whose political differences never distorted his imagination. Wilberforce, who had followed Pitt's actions closely throughout the case, afterwards declared that justice had not been done to Pitt:—

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[1] For new letters of George III see "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies."

[2] Wraxall, iv, 342.

[3] "Bland Burges P.," 89, 90.

> People [he said] were asking what could make Pitt support him [Hastings] on this point and on that, as if he was acting from political motives; whereas he was always weighing in every particular whether Hastings had exceeded the discretionary power lodged in him. I well remember (I could swear to it now) Pitt listening most attentively to some facts which were coming out either in the first or second case. He beckoned me over, and went with me behind the chair, and said: "Does not this look very ill to you?" "Very bad indeed." He then returned to his place and made his speech, giving up Hastings' case. He paid as much impartial attention to it as if he were a juryman.[1]

Here we have evidence at first hand, though belonging to Wilberforce's later years. Clearly it must refer to the events of 13th June; and it shows that if any one person was responsible for Pitt's change of front that person was Wilberforce. Late in life the philanthropist declared that Pitt's regard for truth was exceptionally keen, springing as it did "from a moral purity which appeared to be a part of his nature." He also added that the want of simplicity and frankness sometimes observable in his answers really sprang from this scrupulous veracity.[2]

To quote the opinion of another experienced politician. William Pulteney wrote to Pitt the following hitherto unpublished letter:

> LONDON, 15th June 1786.
>
> I cannot abstain from congratulating you on the line you took on Tuesday. It will do you great credit everywhere, but, what you will always think of more importance, I am convinced it will have the most salutary effects in every part of this great Empire, and particularly in India. Such is the powerful influence of strict honour and justice in those who govern kingdoms that it pervades every mind and in a great degree regulates the conduct of individuals. On the other hand, the wilfully permitting persons in high and responsible situations to go

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," v, 340, 341.

[2] "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 69, 70. A similar remark may be applied to Mr. Gladstone's replies, which often disgusted simple men.

unpunished and uncensured, when guilty of important offences, is sufficient to foster the bad and corrupt principles in all other minds and to lay a foundation for similar and greater offences. You have my hearty thanks, and I am sure will have the thanks of all who understand the importance of your conduct.

I am, etc.
W. PULTENEY.[1]

Few persons did understand his conduct, and sensitive pride kept his lips sealed. Nevertheless to all unprejudiced minds his conduct needed no defence. On that higher plane where truth and justice are alone considered (for justice is applied truth), Pitt did not swerve from the principles which he at first laid down. From the beginning of the Hastings case he had sought to hold the balances even. He left it open to his colleagues to differ from him. He refused the publication of papers favourable to Hastings where they compromised the welfare of the State or the characters of our Indian feudatories. He insisted that the charges against Hastings should be clearly drawn up, and that he should be allowed to answer those charges in person. On the topic of the Rohilla War he did not speak, doubtless because his mind was not made up. The fact that Parliament had three times re-appointed Hastings after that very censurable event, did in a technical sense screen him from prosecution now. But on the Benares affair, no such plea could be urged. It was a question on which the present Parliament alone had to decide.

The enormous vogue enjoyed by Macaulay's Essays compels me once more to notice his treatment of Pitt respecting the Benares charge. A man of philosophic temperament once expressed a wish that he was as sure about anything, as the great Whig historian was about everything. This assertiveness peeps through the veil of diffidence which Macaulay donned before delivering the verdict, that any man with a tenth part of Pitt's abilities ought to have convicted Hastings on the Rohilla charge and acquitted him on the Benares charge.[2] In order to establish this assertion Macaulay passed by the technical plea above named, which must have weighed with Pitt, and then used his powers of special pleading to whittle down Pitt's arguments on the Benares case, so that they seem to turn ultimately on the trumpery question whether the fine inflicted on the Zamindar was rather too large or not. But we may ask, firstly, was it a small affair to exact half a million sterling from a prince who during three years had been hard pressed, and as a matter of fact had paid up the arrears for which that fine was imposed? Did it concern the Zamindar alone? Did it not concern all the subjects from whom that half million must ultimately be wrung?

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[1] Pitt MSS., 169.

[2] This opinion is repeated by Mr. G. W. Hastings, "A Vindication of Warren Hastings," ch. vi.

Not only did the conduct of Hastings far exceed the limits required by justice; it was also bound up with a question on which the stability of our Indian Empire has ever rested. So long as the feudatories of the British Raj feel confidence in his sense of justice, India is safe. Whenever they have cause to believe that injustice and oppression are the characteristics of his rule, the foundations of the Indian Empire are shaken to their base. Not without reason did Fox declare that the decision on the Benares affair was vital to the preservation of our ascendancy in Bengal. The statesmanlike eye of Pitt, we may be sure, discerned the same truth. Besides, there was an additional reason why he should now more than ever resolve to engrave the names of Justice and Mercy on the newly formed arch of the Indian Government. As has been shown, the recent India Bill placed greatly increased powers in the hands of the Governor-General. Burke and Fox had taunted Pitt with setting up a despotism from which endless suffering must flow. The charge was hollow; but, adorned as it was by splendid rhetoric, it created a deep impression. Was it not well, then, to show by a concrete example that any Viceroy who violated the principles of justice would meet with condign punishment at Westminster? A statesman has to consider, not merely the principles of justice, as applied to an individual; he must also think of the results of his actions on the millions whom they will affect; and we may reasonably infer that among the motives which led Pitt to break with many of his friends not the least was a heartfelt desire to safeguard the relations of the feudatories to the Suzerain Power, and to protect the myriads of Hindoos who had no protection save in the dimly known court of appeal at Westminster.

On the charge respecting the spoliation of the Begums of Oude, Pitt also cast his vote against Hastings; and again a majority followed him. It is questionable whether even the sensationally brilliant oration of Sheridan on this affecting topic moved the House so much as the silent but scornful disapproval expressed in Pitt's vote.[1] The impeachment was thenceforth inevitable.

With the forensic pageant that ensued we are not here concerned. Thenceforth the case belonged strictly to the legal domain. Its duration throughout the years 1788-95 was certainly discreditable to British law. Hastings out of his never affluent fortunes spent some £71,000 in the vindication of his actions,[2] and at last secured an acquittal. But though men in Europe forgot the case amidst the potent distractions of the French Revolution, the effect of it was not lost upon the Orient. The comparative calm which settled benignly on India for twelve years may be attributed largely to a renewal of confidence in the sense of justice of our people. After the events of the year 1786 princes and peasants alike felt assured that the most transcendent services, if smirched with acts of injustice, would never screen a Viceroy from the censure of the British Parliament.

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[1] For a hostile account of Pitt's conduct here, see the "Bland Burges P.," 81-9.

[2] "Hist. of the Trial of Warren Hastings," pt. v, 308, 309. His net fortune on 31st January 1786 was given as £65,313, exclusive of £12,000 made over to Mrs. Hastings.

CHAPTER XI

THE IRISH PROBLEM

(1785)

> We have the satisfaction of having proposed a system which will not be discredited even by its failure, and we must wait times and seasons for carrying it into effect.—PITT TO THE DUKE OF RUTLAND, 17th August 1785.

THERE is a story, uncertain as to date and origin, which picturesquely describes Pitt's indebtedness to the author of "The Wealth of Nations."[1] Adam Smith had been invited to meet the young Prime Minister at dinner; but some mischance delayed his arrival. Nevertheless, the guests patiently waited for him, and on his entrance Pitt exclaimed, "Nay, we will stand until you are seated; for we are all your scholars." The compliment came with none the less graciousness because the father of Political Economy had in his work incautiously defined a statesman as "that insidious and crafty animal." Pitt was now to give a new connotation to the word. Almost alone among the politicians of the eighteenth century, he had set himself to gain a store of knowledge which would enable him to cope with the increasingly complex problems of his craft; and thus, in an age when a university degree, the grand tour, and London club-life were held to be a sufficient preparation for a political career, he came forth like a Minerva fully armed at all points.

Among the practical questions to which the Scottish thinker turned the attention of his age, none was more important than those dealing with the relations between England and her American colonies, the desirability of an unfettered trade with France, and the need of a close union with Ireland. The first of these questions had been disposed of by war, and the second will engage our attention in a later chapter. On the Irish question Adam Smith strongly advocated union with Great Britain as conferring on the smaller island the boons which had breathed new life into Scotland, namely, freedom of trade and deliverance from an oppressive dominant caste.

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[1] It may belong to the spring of 1787, when, as we learn from the "Corresp. of Wilberforce," i, 40, Dundas introduced Adam Smith to Pitt and Wilberforce; but the latter does not record the anecdote.

These contentions must have secured the approval of Pitt; for the outlines of his policy both towards Ireland and France bear a striking resemblance to those sketched in "The Wealth of Nations," with this important difference, that after the gain of independence by the Irish Legislature in 1782 the union of the two Parliaments was clearly impossible for the present. We therefore find Pitt turning his attention to the two topics which then chiefly agitated public opinion in Ireland, viz., the reform of Parliament and the fiscal relations to Great Britain. In order to understand Pitt's handling of these problems it is necessary briefly to review the course of Anglo-Irish affairs.

The story of the dealings of England with the sister isle in the years 1688-1778 is one that it is painful to contemplate. The efforts to dragoon the Catholic Irish out of their creed, or to grind them into the lowest stratum of society, produced a race hatred of which we are still reaping the dire harvest. The Celt broods over the past; and his memory clings round the days when Papists were excluded from Parliament, from the possession of freehold estates, from the professions and from juries; when they might not act as guardians or possess a horse worth more than £5; and when their Protestant neighbours on tendering £5 could take any horse that pleased them. All this and far more may be read in the pages of Lecky. As for the ruffianly enactments of the Irish penal code, many of them were so monstrous as to bring their own cure. In the latter half of the eighteenth century even the arrogant Protestant squirearchy of Ireland found it impossible or undesirable to enforce them.

The growth of principles of toleration and enlightenment which marked the years 1760-80 had some effect even on the nominees of Protestant landlords and borough-mongers who formed the bulk of the Irish Parliament. It is a curious fact that even the narrowest and most bigoted of governing castes cannot wholly resist the tendencies of the times; and the Dublin Parliament, representing only a part even of the Protestant minority of Irishmen, was no more able to keep out new ideas than the members of the pocket boroughs of Britain could withstand the Reform movement of 1830-32. The infiltration of novel principles into the Irish Legislature was slower and more partial, inasmuch as that body misrepresented even more ludicrously the opinions of the mass of Irishmen.[1] It had long been swayed by a clique of politicians who were termed "Undertakers," because they undertook its manipulation, ostensibly in the interests of the British Government, but really in their own. The traditions of the past and the determination of the members of the Protestant Established Church to keep the Government in their own hands, formed a massive barrier against change. Yet the dissolving touch of the Time-Spirit and the shocks of war were at work upon that barrier; and when the war with the American colonies and France strained the resources of Great Britain and Ireland past endurance, it showed signs of giving way on two questions, the one religious, the other fiscal. In the year 1778, Catholics who took the oath of allegiance were allowed to become in effect owners of land, that is, they might hold land on lease for 999 years. Further, the odious temptations formerly held out to sons of Catholics to abjure their creed were also abrogated. That year therefore seemed to be the beginning of an epoch of toleration, which it was the ardent desire of Pitt to crown with an act of justice too long delayed.

At present, however, we are concerned mainly with his attempt to reform the fiscal relations between the two islands. Until the year 1778 Irishmen were still in the state of economic vassalage to England which the Parliaments of William III had forcibly imposed. In some respects, especially in regard to the woollen industry, they were now worse off than in that time of humiliation. The enactment of 1699, which absolutely forbade the export of her woollen goods, hopelessly crippled an otherwise promising industry. Nor was this all. Her staple product, wool, might not be sent to foreign lands lest their manufacturers might benefit, and become rivals to ours. That fear was not wholly groundless in the case of France; for French weavers found that Irish wool supplied the qualities lacking in their own wool. The result was the rise of an extensive smuggling trade in that article from

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[1] Of the 118 Parliamentary boroughs as many as 87 (including Belfast!) were "close," that is, were controlled by Government or by a local magnate or the Corporation. See a list in "Castlereagh P.," iv, 428-30; also Porritt, "Unreformed House of Commons," ii, pt. vi.

Ireland to France, which the Government utterly failed to stop.

The outbreak of war with the American colonies, as I have said, brought all these questions to an acute phase; and in 1776 the British Government so far relaxed the prohibitions on export as to allow Irish woollens to be exported for the clothing of the Irish troops serving away from their own country. At the same time Irish fishermen were admitted to a share in the Newfoundland and other fisheries from which they had been excluded.

Nothing, however, was done for the most important of Irish manufactures. The linen industry had not been severely hampered by the British Government. While prohibiting the export of fine linens, and of sail-cloth, in the supposed interests of British manufacturers, the British Government granted bounties on the coarse linens exported from Ireland; and up to the year 1771 that industry had greatly prospered. Thereafter it underwent a serious decline. So alarming was the shrinkage of trade and the rise of Ireland's debt, that in 1778 Lord North's Ministry was fain to propose the abolition of many of the fiscal disabilities which sapped her strength. She was to be allowed to send her products to the British colonies and to receive theirs directly in return; but, in order to allay the fears of British manufacturers, the old restrictions on the Irish woollen trade remained in force. Nothing, however, could allay those fears. At once loud complaints were raised from Aberdeen to Plymouth, so that North gave up nearly all his proposals; and Ireland gained little or nothing from his well meant efforts, except that ships built in Ireland thenceforth counted as British-built, and could receive bounties granted for the fisheries.[1]

Where reason and statesmanship had failed, force was to succeed. The utter inability of the British Government to defend Ireland against threatened French invasions furnished the pretext for the formation of powerful Volunteer corps, consisting solely of Protestants, and therefore especially strong in Ulster. The Presbyterians of that province, smarting under the civic disabilities imposed by the old Test Act, and under an equally archaic system of commerce, demanded redress of these grievances, in the latter of which the more lethargic

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[1] Lecky, iv, 429, 440, 450.

Romanists gave them increasing support. Religious antipathies were forgotten in the face of Ireland's urgent needs. The governing coterie at Dublin Castle failed either to check the movement or to revive the old schisms. It seemed that the intolerable burdens of the British fiscal system were about to mould the jarring elements of Irish society into the unity that marks a nation.

Though they failed to reach that far-off goal, they for the present won a noteworthy success. By combining to refrain from the purchase of British goods they dealt a severe blow at the system thrust upon them. Nor did they abstain from threats of force. The Volunteers paraded the streets of Dublin with cannon bearing the motto, "Free Trade—or this." In face of an overwhelming opposition, the Lord-Lieutenant, the Earl of Carlisle, advised the British Government to give way; and at the close of the year 1779, and early in 1780, a series of enactments was passed at Westminster withdrawing the prohibitions on the export of woollen goods and glass from Ireland. Commerce with the British colonies was now also provisionally thrown open to Irish merchants, and they were admitted to a share in the Levant trade.

At the same time the cause of religious toleration gained an equally signal triumph. The strength of the Ulster Volunteers and the abatement of religious bigotry brought the Irish Parliament to pass a measure for relieving the Protestant Dissenters of that land from the sacramental test which had been looked on as one of the bulwarks of the Established Church; and in the spring of 1780 the British Parliament gave its grudging assent to that boon for Ireland which for nearly half a century longer it persisted in withholding from Nonconformists in England and Wales. As was stated in Chapter V of this work, the Irish Volunteers in the year 1782 gained another most important concession, namely, the recognition of the legislative independence of the Irish Parliament. Fortunately the British Government on this occasion acted with grace and dignity. The Rockingham Ministry advocated the change, which passed both Houses with but a single adverse vote, that of Lord Loughborough. The disagreeable fact, that this last boon, like the others, was extorted by force, was thus tactfully glozed over; and when the suspicions of the good faith of England aroused in Ireland by that restless demagogue, Flood, were laid to rest by the Renunciation Act of the year 1783, the relations of the two islands became almost cordial.

Causes of friction, however, remained. The royal veto might, and probably would, still tell against the Irish Legislature, even though the veto of the British Parliament and of the Privy Council had lapsed. The influence of the Lord Lieutenant and of his Chief Secretary on the Irish Ministers was also great; and his influence was distinctly British. Dublin Castle could also generally determine the votes of a majority in both Houses of Parliament. Further, it was quite possible that on commercial questions the Irish Parliament would differ sharply from that of Westminster. This seemed so in the early months of Pitt's Ministry. The beginning of the year 1784 found Ireland depressed by a very inclement winter; and the cry was raised that her Parliament should "protect" her industries, especially that of wool, from English competition. The exertions of the new Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Rutland, aided perhaps by the reluctance of the more moderate members to enter on a commercial war with England, sufficed to defeat these proposals; but the Irish House of Commons, in May 1784, unanimously passed an address to the King, emphasizing the need of "a wise and well-digested plan for a liberal arrangement of a commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland." This was the friendly challenge which Pitt determined to take up. From the outset he made the Irish commercial question peculiarly his own. More than once in his correspondence with the Duke of Rutland he describes it as the nearest to his heart.[1]

No problem could have been more tangled. Ireland was still in a very restless state. Despite the warnings of that uncrowned King of Ireland, Grattan, the Volunteers began to enroll Catholics and to threaten the coercion of the Dublin Parliament. But, as the Duke of Rutland wrote to Pitt, Parliament "does not bear the smallest resemblance to representation"; and a petition from a great meeting held at Belfast in July 1784 declared that "the [Irish] House of Commons has degenerated into a fixed body so little connected with the people that it ceases to be a guardian of their property, and hath become the representative of an overbearing aristocracy." The petitioners asserted that the delegates of the Volunteers were a representative body, and urged the King to dissolve the Irish House of Commons.[1] This demand was widely echoed. The Volunteers, having already through their delegates exerted on Parliament a pressure which was semi-national, refused either to let politics alone, or to disband. Ultimately their recklessness and the efforts of Grattan undermined their influence, and they gradually dwindled away; but, for the present, they seemed able to extort all their demands, prominent among which was that for the "protection" of Irish industries and products. In his first long communication to Pitt, the Duke of Rutland dwelt on the urgent need of investigating Irish claims, though he frankly declared that he could not understand the commercial question. Open-handed to ostentation, and devoted to the pleasures of the table, this affable young aristocrat occasionally showed signs of political foresight, as when he ventured to predict "that without *an union* Ireland will not be connected with Great Britain in twenty years longer."[2]

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[1] "Pitt-Rutland Corresp.," 74, 96, 107, 119; "Rutland P.," iii, 193.

Far abler and more painstaking was his chief secretary, Orde, on whom was to fall the burden of work connected with the proposed Reform. The letters which passed between him and Pitt in the summer of 1784 show the care taken by both of them to master the facts of the situation. Orde (the future Lord Bolton) warned Pitt that a resolute effort would soon be made to effect the entire separation of the two Kingdoms, and urged him to "act towards Ireland with the utmost liberality consistent with your own safety: it must in the long run be the wisest policy." Above all he insisted, as the duke had also done, on the need of a firm decision, which even the malcontents must regard as final.[3]

Pitt on his side sought to procure the fullest information on all points. In regard to the Reform of the Irish Parliament he deprecated any extreme measure such as the admission of the Roman Catholics then appeared to be; but he advocated the extension of political rights to Protestant Dissenters; for, as he forcibly put it, "we may keep the Parliament, but lose the people." As for the fiscal question he required first of all a satisfactory knowledge of the facts, so that some general principles of action could be agreed on; and he urged that the financial relations of the Kingdoms should be regulated according as the prosperity of Ireland increased with her enlarged commercial opportunities. Justice required that Ireland should then take her share of the imperial burdens, which at present rested almost entirely with Great Britain. Finally they must seek some means calculated to bestow on Ireland that permanent tranquillity which the late commercial concessions had failed to secure.[1]

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[1] Pitt MSS., 324.

[2] "Pitt-Rutland Corresp.," 17, 19.

[3] Ashbourne, 84, 85.

In this letter, dated 19th September 1784, we see not only an outline of the scheme which took definite form in the Irish Propositions, or Resolutions, of the session of 1785, but also an instructive example of Pitt's methods of procedure. He began by collecting all the ascertainable facts, including the causes of previous failures, and, by sifting these data, he sought to arrive at general principles which would illuminate the whole question. In a word, his method was inductive. It begun with facts and ended with principles. Unlike the French legislators of 1789-93, who first enunciated principles and then sought to square the facts of life to them, he started with a solid basis and reared on it a structure from whose summit the toiler might take a wide survey. The Revolutionists built symmetrically and grandly, but without foundations.

In order thoroughly to master details, Pitt summoned from Ireland not only Orde but also Foster, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Beresford, Chief Commissioner of the Revenue. Both were able and masterful men, the former the doughtiest opponent, the latter the staunchest champion, of Pitt's Act of Union. Beresford did much to beautify Dublin, and his name lives on in Beresford Place. With these experienced officials Pitt had many conferences at Downing Street, or at the house on the north side of Putney Heath, which he rented for the latter part of 1784. They confirmed Orde's advice as to the wisdom of granting to Ireland complete liberty and equality in matters of trade, but warned him as to the difficulty of drawing from Ireland any contribution to the imperial funds. Here it should be remembered that Ireland supported 15,000 regular troops, 3,000 of whom were at the disposal of the British Executive in Ireland, while the others could be moved from Ireland with the consent of her Parliament.

Converse with Foster must also have strengthened Pitt's resolve to press on the Reform of the Irish Parliament; for he now warned the Duke of Rutland, who stoutly opposed Reform, not to confuse peaceable efforts in that direction with subversive or treasonable schemes; and in a notable phrase of his letter of 4th December, he declared that Parliamentary Reform must sooner or later be carried in both countries. As regards procedure, he thought it best to postpone a change in the Irish franchise until a similar measure came forward at Westminster; for this, if successful, would impart to the movement in Ireland an irresistible force. In the meantime it would be well to take up the commercial problem.

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[1] Ashbourne, 85-91.

Pitt's sanguine temperament here led him into a tactical mistake. The Irish Resolutions were destined to arouse in Great Britain a storm of opposition which swept away the hopes of the Reform Associations; and the collapse of their efforts told unfavourably on the Irish political movement. Probably also he erred in bringing forward his proposals first in Dublin—a matter on which Fox readily aroused resentment at Westminster. Yet, where the issues were so tangled, it is difficult to say whether success could have crowned Pitt's efforts had they been put forth in a different order.[1] From his letter of 7th October 1784 to the Lord Lieutenant we see that he looked on the Reform of the Irish Parliament as simpler, but yet "perhaps more difficult and hazardous," than the commercial questions then at stake.

Here again he calculated wrongly. Ireland's demand for equality of trading advantages with Great Britain was certain to meet with vehement opposition from our manufacturers, as the events of the year 1778 convincingly showed. His mistake is the more remarkable as he proposed "to give Ireland an almost unlimited communication of commercial advantage, if we can receive in return some security that her strength and riches will be our benefit, and that she will contribute from time to time in their increasing proportions to the common exigencies of the Empire."[2] How buoyant was Pitt's nature to cherish the hope that British merchants would concede commercial equality to Ireland, or that the factions at Dublin would take up the burdens of Empire!

No letter of Pitt's rings with more enthusiasm, though an undertone of anxiety can be detected, than the very long one of 6th-7th January 1785. Writing until far past midnight he explained to the Lord-Lieutenant in great detail the aim which he had in view, namely, the sweeping aside of all local prejudices, so that England and Ireland might become "one country in effect, though for local concerns under distinct Legislatures." The pupil of Adam Smith had caught a clear glimpse of the truth that States which throw down their customs' barriers become effectually parts of the same body. But he now saw that British manufacturers would probably resist so sweeping a change; and he pointed out to Rutland that the admission of Ireland to commercial equality, even in the case of the export trade from British Colonies, to which, he said, she had no claim of right, involved a solemn duty to respond to imperial duties. He then pointed out that Ireland would have more than mere equality; for Great Britain was burdened by taxes which were the outcome of those duties; and Irish shippers, with their lighter burdens, might find it possible to export the produce of those colonies to Great Britain to the detriment of British shippers. In many ways he sought to disprove the claims or excuses put forward by Irish patriots why they should receive much and give little in return. He showed the impossibility of conceding so much unless Ireland would irrevocably pledge herself to contribute, according to her ability, to the expenses of the Empire.[1]

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[1] Grenville, writing in November 1798, said that he considered the faulty procedure adopted in 1785 largely contributed to the failure. ("Buckingham P.," ii, 412.)

[2] "Pitt-Rutland Corresp.," 43.

The despatches sent by the Home Secretary, Lord Sydney, to the Lord Lieutenant, and the letters of Pitt to Orde, contained precise instructions on this last point. Pitt first desired that Ireland's contribution should go towards the navy.[2] Then for a time he harboured the notion that it should go towards his proposed Sinking Fund, because that money would not pass beyond England, and would return in the form of a trade the balance of which was known to be in favour of Ireland.[3] But the Cabinet adopted the earlier proposal, with the proviso that the contribution towards the naval expenses of the Empire should be made in such a way as the Irish Parliament might direct. The letter of George III to Pitt, of 28th January 1785, shows that the King insisted on a contribution from Ireland as essential.

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[1] "Pitt-Rutland Corresp.," 55-75.

[2] *Ibid.*, 73.

[3] Ashbourne, 104 (Letter of Pitt to Orde, 1st February 1785). Irish exports to Great Britain for 1779 were £2,256,659, her imports thence only £1,644,770 (Pitt MSS., 322).

The ten Propositions, or Resolutions, embodying the aims of Pitt, were brought before the Irish Parliament on 7th February 1785. They embodied the information gleaned from Beresford, Foster, and Orde; and a report recently drawn up by a special committee of the British Privy Council also furnished useful information. Modified in some particulars, and, with the addition of a Proposition soon to be noticed, they passed the Dublin Parliament with little difficulty. In their modified form they may be summarized as follows. Foreign and colonial products were to pass between Great Britain and Ireland, in either direction, without any increase of duty. The goods and products of the sister islands were also to be imported either free or at identical rates; or again, where the duties were not equal, they were to be reduced to the lower of the two tariffs hitherto in operation. All prohibitions on inter-insular trade were to lapse without renewal, unless it should seem expedient in the case of corn, meal, malt, flour, and biscuits. The British Government required that, when the "hereditary revenue" exceeded a certain sum, Ireland should pay over the surplus as a contribution to the naval expenses of the Empire. As the "hereditary revenue" consisted mainly of custom and excise duties, its increase (which was generally steady) afforded the best index of the prosperity of Ireland. Moreover that branch of the revenue had hitherto been under the general direction of the Crown; and Pitt's proposal to transfer its surplus to the control of the Irish Parliament was both statesmanlike and conciliatory.[1]

Nevertheless, the letters of the Duke of Rutland to Pitt revealed the conviction even of the best friends of Government that the Propositions would fail if they were coupled with any demand for a money payment. The time, said the Duke, was very critical. They were seeking to organize a legal militia force in place of the self-constituted Volunteers; Grattan and Daly had spoken splendidly for the change; but the demand for a subsidy would jeopardize everything, even the connection with Great Britain.[2] A secret report which he sent to Pitt showed that of the members of the large towns of Ireland, only Londonderry was well disposed to the Resolutions. In the case of Waterford ("well governed, under Lord Tyrone's influence") the freemen opposed them while the two members supported them. Belfast, a close borough, opposed them. In all, he reckoned forty-five members hostile, twelve friendly, and the others absent or not accounted for. A list followed of the "expectations" of members as regards judgeships, pensions and sinecures.[1]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 311-14. Lecky, vi, 390, 395, and his "Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland," 114.

[2] "Rutland P." (Hist. MSS. Comm.), iii, 162-68.

As Rutland and Orde had foreseen, the assailants of the measure fastened on the question of the contribution. How could a country, whose annual expenditure at present exceeded income by £150,000, and whose absentee landlords drained her of a million a year, pay a large sum to the richer island? Did not Ireland contribute largely in men and money to the army? And was not a great part of her administration controlled by a Monarch and a Ministry in whose succession and appointment she had no voice? Such were the invectives of that most acrid and restless of demagogues, Flood. Far more statesmanlike was the conduct of Grattan. Equalling, nay excelling, Flood in his oratorical powers, he held them under the control of a masculine reason. As his energy and tact had gained for his land the boon of legislative independence, so now he sought to cement friendly relations with Great Britain, and therefore gave a general assent to the commercial proposals. The Irish Ministers also pointed out that Great Britain opened a far larger market than Ireland did; that the industries of the larger island, being handicapped by war taxes and high wages, could be exploited by Irishmen, whose national burdens were comparatively light, and that the colonial trade was now to be opened up in its entirety and for ever, not on terms that were revocable at the option of the British Government, as was the case in 1780.

All these arguments were of no avail to carry the proposal respecting Ireland's contribution to the navy. Though Pitt had carefully framed it so that Ireland would pay nothing until she was in a prosperous state, he failed to meet the rooted objections of the Dublin Parliament to money going out of the country. Grattan focused the opposition by demanding that Ireland should pay nothing until her Government had put an end to the long series of deficits. In private conversations with him Orde failed to weaken this decision, in which nearly all Irishmen concurred. A Resolution to that effect was therefore added. It was further arranged that when the annual hereditary revenue, which then stood at £652,000, should exceed £656,000 in time of peace, the surplus should go towards the support of the imperial navy in such a way as the Irish Parliament should direct. Additional taxes were then voted which were estimated to yield £140,000 a year.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 320.

No beginning could have been less auspicious. The arrangement was far less satisfactory than the worst of the alternative plans to which Pitt expressed the hope that Orde would never resort. The contribution, on the present terms, could be evaded by any juggling Chancellor of the Exchequer who should contrive a series of small and profitable deficits. Consequently Orde, who came to London to persuade Pitt of the need of the change, found him inexorable. Pitt was resolved "not to proceed until the condition should be taken away from the last Resolution."[1] This also appears in a part of his letter to the Marquis of Buckingham:

> [*Secret.*]
>
> Sunday, February 20, 1785.[2]
>
> . . . I am able to tell you confidentially that we shall certainly *suspend* the final approbation of the commercial system, and declare the impossibility of completing it till more satisfaction and explicit provision is made in Ireland respecting the object of contribution.
>
> Yours ever,
> W. Pitt.

In opening his case at Westminster on 22nd February, Pitt had to contend with the discouragement caused by this rebuff, and with a fit of hoarseness, which he informed Grenville he had been trying to sleep off without much success. Nevertheless his speech was allowed to be a fine effort. He besought members fairly to consider his proposals, which aimed at settling the relations of the two islands on a liberal and permanent basis. Glancing scornfully at the tactics of the Opposition and the campaign of malice and misrepresentation started by the "Gazetteer" and taken up by various trading bodies, he claimed that there should be fair play, at least until he had stated his case fully. It was complex, and his proposals might need modification in details. The old system of cruel and abominable restraint imposed on Irish trade had vanished. They now had to complete a new system, and community of benefits was the only principle on which they could proceed. They proposed entirely and for ever to open to Ireland the trade of our colonies except that of India, which was a monopoly of the East India Company. There was no solid ground for the fear that so poor a country as Ireland would become the emporium of colonial goods, and would re-export them to our shores. Equally unlikely was the suggestion that Ireland would undersell us in manufactures; for British energy had secured for our goods a fairly large market in Ireland even against her import duties. He then referred guardedly to the subject of Ireland's contribution to the imperial navy. Finally, while deprecating any immediate decision, he declared that what England lost by the bargain she would more than recoup from the growing friendliness and prosperity of the sister island. He therefore proposed a general motion for the permanent and irrevocable admission of Ireland to all the advantages of British commerce when she irrevocably pledged herself to pay a sum towards the defence of commerce.[1]

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[1] "Rutland P.," iii, 191; "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 314; Ashbourne, 105, 108.

[2] Chevening MSS.

The Opposition, exasperated by Pitt's ungenerous treatment of Fox concerning the Westminster election, at once opened a furious fire of criticisms. Fox, who held the old Whig views in favour of a "national commerce," that is, protection, urged that Ireland would probably smuggle into Great Britain the produce of foreign colonies, and would become the "grand arbitress of all the commercial interests of the Empire." The Resolutions ought, he claimed, first to have been moved at Westminster, in which he was probably right. If they were passed, he said, Great Britain would never have anything more to concede to Ireland. The Navigation Acts, the source of England's prosperity, would be a dead letter. As for Ireland's contribution to the navy, he would "trust everything to her generosity, but not much to her prudence." Eden, formerly Irish Secretary, then dwelt on the danger of allowing a lightly taxed country to compete with a heavily burdened country. The debt of Great Britain was a hundredfold that of Ireland; and, while a Briton paid on an average fifty shillings a year in taxes, an Irishman paid only eight shillings. The plan now proposed would be a revolution in British trade. These words are remarkable in view of Eden's desertion of North and his assistance to Pitt in carrying through a still greater "revolution," the commercial treaty with France of 1786. The speeches of Fox and Eden did some good; their attack on Pitt's measure convinced Irishmen that it must have many excellences. The Earl of Mornington (afterwards the Marquis Wellesley) declared that Ireland would warmly support Pitt. Beresford also stated that the Irish members now only wanted an excuse for siding with him; but England must beware of pressing Ireland too hard in this bargain. A rebuff would seriously jeopardize the cause of order.[1]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 311-28.

No sense of prudence or responsibility restrained the action of the British Opposition and their mercantile allies. A campaign had already begun. It bore signs of careful organization. The signal was given by the "Gazetteer" of 16th February, which pointed out that the Navigation Acts, the source of Britain's prosperity, would be virtually annulled by Pitt's proposals. On the next day it showed that Irish competition, based on low wages, must ruin our industries. On 18th February a meeting of silk manufacturers protested against the Resolutions. On the 24th the planters and merchants of the West Indies followed suit. On that day the "Gazetteer" stated that, if Pitt's measure became law, the Exchange would be transferred from Cornhill to Cork; later on it declared that Arkwright and Dempster would set up their factories in Ireland. On 3rd March the "Morning Chronicle," the organ of the middle classes, joined in the hue and cry, declaring that even as it was the balance of trade between Great Britain and Ireland was in favour of the latter, and that the larger island must be drained of money by the smaller if the old restrictions were not maintained.

Meetings of protest were now in full swing. Delegates of the West India merchants had an interview with Pitt and declared his answer to be unsatisfactory. The merchants themselves refused, by fifty-nine to forty, to petition against his proposals, but the minority published and circulated their opinions. The manufacturing towns, except those of the woollen districts, petitioned strongly against the Resolutions. Manchester, Lancaster, and Dudley each sent two petitions to that effect; while three apiece emanated from Glasgow, Paisley, and Bristol. So the game of misrepresentation went on. A petition from Lancashire contained 80,000 signatures; and a document purporting to come from 13,243 weavers of Glasgow and Rutherglen, shows that artisans were as much alarmed as the merchants. The weavers stated their conviction that if the Resolutions became law, they would be undersold by the Irish in the home market and reduced to beggary.[1] This solidarity of interest is noteworthy. In those days the "manufacturer" was actually, as well as in name, the weaver; and tens of thousands of households, where the hand-loom kept the wolf from the door through the winter, saw pale Ruin stalking behind the figure of thrifty, resourceful, energetic Paddy. The agitation therefore spread through all classes with a unanimity that would scarcely be possible now, when the term "manufacturer" has come to mean a capitalist who owns a factory where nothing is done by hand. Then the solidarity of interest between merchants and weavers was obvious. In imagination both classes saw their industries wafted by a cruel east wind to a land whose inhabitants they disliked and despised.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 247, 248.

Some of the petitions were based on false information. That of the Glasgow cotton workers complained that the fourth Resolution, as it left the Irish Parliament, would place a heavy duty on British cottons.[2] But Pitt had throughout insisted that there must be an equalizing of duties on both sides of the Irish Sea, the lower level being always taken. In truth, all reasoning was in vain. The protectionist spirit was proof against all arguments. Thus, the committee of the merchants and manufacturers of Sheffield declared that their industry could not be carried on without grave injury if the present duty on bar iron imported into Great Britain, namely, 56 shillings per ton, were reduced to the level then obtaining in Ireland, that is, 10 shillings a ton.

Still keener was the opposition in Bristol. The protectionist feeling had lost none of the bitterness which mainly caused the unseating of Burke in the election of 1774. The sugar refiners of that town now declared that they had spent more than £150,000 in buildings and plant, all of which would go for naught, if the Irish Parliament, "under the privilege of importing raw and refined sugars through that country to this [should] lay a heavy duty on loaf and lump sugar and a small duty on bastard and ground sugars and molasses"; for the Irish merchants would then "effectually prevent our exporting the former to that kingdom and also to foreign markets, and enable them to send the latter into Great Britain at a less price than it can be manufactured here under the burthen of the high duties, the high price of labour, and heavy taxes, which would inevitably tend to the ruin of that valuable branch of trade in this kingdom."[1] The Bristol sugar-refiners can scarcely have read Pitt's proposals, which implied equal duties on all articles at British and Irish ports; and the Irish Parliament had agreed to this. The notion that Irish sugar-refiners, by complex duties of their own devising, would soon beat their British rivals out of foreign markets and ruin them in the home market, is a sign of the mad folly of the time. Against stupidity such as this even the gods fight in vain.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 321.

[2] This is refuted by the official wording of that Resolution as passed at Dublin, in "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 312.

By no arguments could the hubbub be appeased. Pamphlets, especially one by Lord Sheffield, denounced the doom awaiting England should Pitt's Resolutions pass. In a short time sixty-four petitions poured in against them;[2] and the manufacturers of Great Britain, under the chairmanship of Wedgwood, formed a "Great Chamber" in order to stave off the catastrophe. Yet Pitt's energies and spirits seemed to rise with the rising opposition. In order to emphasize the importance of commerce, he had recently appointed a Committee of Council for Commerce, which promised to answer the purposes which that ornamental body, the Board of Trade (abolished in 1782), had signally failed to fulfil. The new Council was charged to examine manufacturers and others as to the relations of Anglo-Irish commerce and the probable effect of the Resolutions. Similar investigations were made at the bar of the House of Commons. Pitt cherished high hopes from these inquiries. "The more the subject is discussed," he wrote to Orde on 4th April, "the more our cause will be benefited in the end. . . . I do not myself entertain a doubt of complete success." To the Duke of Rutland he wrote on the 16th: "Though we may lose a little in popularity for the time, we shall ultimately gain—at least the country will, which is enough."[1]

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[1] Pitt MSS., 321.

[2] Fifty-six petitions had been sent in against Lord North's proposals in 1778. Daniel Pulteney wrote on 22nd March: "The selfishness, ignorance, and credulity of many more commercial towns has been too successfully practised on by Opposition." He says Nottingham was worked on by "Portland's emissaries." The day before he expressed regret at Pitt's obstinacy over the "cursed" Westminster scrutiny ("Rutland P.," iii, 192, 193).

The report of the committee is very curious, as showing the difficulty of obtaining trustworthy statistics even on the weightiest topics. The Irish accounts showed a far larger export of goods to Great Britain than of imports from Great Britain; while, on the contrary, the British Custom House returns gave the balance of trade as largely against Ireland. The committee could discover no means of accounting for this extraordinary discrepancy.[2] Thus, while protectionists on both sides of the Irish Sea were croaking over the decline of their trade and the growth of that of their rival, the official returns showed that (as they would have phrased it) the balance of trade was so largely in their favour as to warrant the hope of the speedy exhaustion of that rival.

In matters which were within the ken of the financiers of that age, the report was reassuring. The woollen manufacturers of Norwich declared that, though the wages of Irish spinners were less by one-half than those of English spinners, Irish competition was not to be feared under the conditions now proposed. Everett, a London merchant, maintained that the British manufacturers, owing to their skill, taste, and ingenuity, would always have a superiority over those of Ireland, provided that British sheep and wool were not exported thither. Nine woollen manufacturers of Yorkshire were decidedly of this opinion. The chief clothier of Devizes expected harm from Irish competition only in the cheaper stuffs.[3] For the cotton industry the evidence was less encouraging, the witnesses from Manchester claiming that Irish thread could be spun 20 per cent. cheaper than British thread, and that an import duty of 10½ per cent. was needed to protect the home market.[4] Representative silk merchants of London and Scotland had little apprehension for the future, until the Irish workers developed skill and taste.[5] As for the iron trade, the evidence of eight iron-masters who were examined refuted the reasoning of the Sheffield petition. Provided that Ireland did not pay a smaller duty than Great Britain on imports of bar iron, they asserted that they could hold their own against her small and struggling iron industry.[1]

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[1] Ashbourne, 121.

[2] "Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council" (1st March 1785). (J. Stockdale,) 4. Pitt stated in his letter of 6th January 1785 to Rutland, that Ireland bought far less from Great Britain than she sold to her.

[3] *Ibid.*, 8-30. [4] *Ibid.*, 31-42. [5] *Ibid.*, 43-49.

In face of the alarmist statements of Wedgwood in public, his evidence before the committee is of some interest. When asked whether he feared Irish competition in pottery if the duties in both kingdoms were equalized, he replied that "there might be danger of a competition in time, in their own and every foreign market.[2] I should think we were safer if earthenware was allowed to be imported free of all duties into both countries." This was the man who headed the protectionist "Great Chamber of Manufacturers." Wedgwood's chief manager admitted that he had only the day before heard that any pottery at all was made in Ireland. Is it surprising that Pitt sharply criticized Wedgwood's tactics?

Other strange features of this report are, first, that the outcry in England against any relaxation of duties was greatest in the case of the very articles, calicoes and sugar, in which the Irish Parliament had recently imposed higher duties; secondly, that whereas much of the evidence told in favour of inter-insular Free Trade, the committee decided in favour of a system of moderate duties to be agreed on by the two Governments.[3] Some such conclusion was perhaps inevitable in view of the popular clamour; but the committee made no suggestion how the two Parliaments, now drifting into fiscal hostility, were to come to terms.

If the evidence contained in the report had been duly weighed, the scare among British traders must have passed away; but official reports are of little avail to thwart the efforts of panic-mongers. In vain did George Rose, in an unsigned pamphlet, point the moral of the case, and appeal to the common sense of his countrymen.[4] The Opposition had the ear of the public, and the fate of the Resolutions in their present form was evidently sealed. Probably Pulteney was right in stating that the report came out too late to influence public opinion, and that Pitt had unaccountably underrated the force of the prejudices contending against him. Now, when the vote on the Westminster Scrutiny alarmed him, he became perhaps unduly cautious.[5] This may be the true explanation of his disposition to compromise. In his letter of 21st May, to the Duke of Rutland, he dwelt on the difficulties arising from the unscrupulous tactics of the enemy and the very marked independence of a large number of his supporters, so that "we are hardly sure from day to day what impression they may receive."

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[1] "Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council," 50-55.

[2] *Ibid.*, 68.

[3] *Ibid.*, 78, 79.

[4] "The Proposed System of Trade with Ireland explained" (1785).

[5] Letter of 6th April to Duke of Rutland in "Rutland P.," iii, 197.

This avowal is of some interest. It shows how critical was Pitt's position in the spring of 1785. As has been seen in a former chapter, he had strained the allegiance of his motley following by taking up too many thorny questions at once. The composite elements—Foxite, Northite, and Chathamite—had not yet been fused into unity by the power of his genius and the threatening pressure of France. Only by the most careful leading could he keep his supporters together, and save the country from the turmoil which a Fox-North Ministry must have caused. There was the danger; and we may be sure that Pitt clung to office, not merely from love of power (though he did love power), but because, in the proud words of Chatham, he knew that he could guide his country aright, and that no one else could.

Viewing the question of the independence of members of Parliament in a more general way, we may hazard the conjecture that in the days of pocket boroughs and small electorates members probably acted more independently than in the present time, when their action is apt to be the resultant of two external forces, pressure from constituents and pressure from the party "whip." However we may explain the fact, it is certain that Pitt, despite his huge majority, failed to carry three important proposals in 1785-6; and in the case of the Irish Propositions he hesitated and lost the day.

In the second week of May, 1785, the Prime Minister bent before the storm, and on the 12th presented his modified measure in the form of twenty Propositions. The chief changes were those tending to safeguard our West India planters and merchants against the secret importation of the products of the French or Spanish colonies into this country on Irish ships. He maintained the monopoly of the East India Company in all the seas and lands between the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Magellan, but allowed the Company's ships to export goods from Ireland to the East Indies. Further, he proposed that the Navigation Laws, whether present or future, and the enactments respecting colonial commerce, should be equally binding on both kingdoms. Respecting the reduction of duties in either country, it was suggested that they should not fall below 10½ per cent.; also that no new duties should be imposed except such as would "balance duties on internal consumption." He also added a Proposition concerning the copyright of books. Respecting Ireland's contribution to the navy, Pitt annulled the Irish proposal asserting the prior need of balancing income and expenditure, and required that the proposed financial arrangement should be perpetual.

In his speeches of 12th May and succeeding days he showed that most of the petitions against his plan were founded on error, and he refuted the hackneyed assertion that, because Ireland was lightly taxed and wages were low, she would therefore undersell Britons in their own markets. Considering her extreme poverty, he said, her burdens were in effect as great as those of England; her backwardness in industry would long cripple her; moreover, for skilled labour she had to pay as dearly as British employers. He claimed that a liberal scheme of commercial union would benefit both islands, just as the Union with Scotland had immensely furthered the prosperity of Great Britain, despite the prophecies of ruin with which it was at the time received.

His opponents now changed their tactics. Seeing that the Propositions had been altered largely in deference to their fears, they could scarcely meet them with a direct attack. They therefore sought to procure their rejection, if not at Westminster, then at Dublin. Congratulating themselves on having caused the abandonment of the first proposals, as fraught with ruin to Great Britain, they sought to set Ireland in a flame against the amended measure. It is true that Fox deprecated the concession of the proposed advantages to Ireland, on the ground that they would subject our workers to the caprices of the Dublin Parliament. But he reserved his denunciations for the proposals which treated Ireland as a subsidiary State, in the matter of the Navigation Acts. Above all, he declared, he would trust Ireland where the Prime Minister distrusted her, namely, in the contribution to the navy. Put that to her as a debt of honour, said he, and she would discharge it. Compel her, and she would either refuse from injured pride or concede it grudgingly, while perhaps equally withdrawing her support from the army. "I will not," he exclaimed, "barter English commerce for Irish slavery: that is not the price I would pay, nor is this the thing I would purchase." Finally he declared that the House could not understand these matters so well as the traders and workers of Great Britain, who had overwhelmingly declared against the measure. Fox did well to disclaim any positive opinions on these subjects; for he took no interest in them, and is known never to have read Adam Smith's work, which he scoffed at as a collection of entertaining theories.[1] We can now understand his conduct in declaiming against the new safeguards for British industry, which he himself had demanded; and if we may judge from Wraxall, the most telling parts of his speech were the personal touches in which he reprobated Pitt's lofty dictatorial manner, and his novel connection with the "King's friend," Jenkinson. Formerly War Secretary under Lord North,[2] he had recently been appointed by Pitt head of the new "Committee of Council for the Superintendence of Commerce." Burke, who must have approved Pitt's proposals (except the contribution from Ireland, against which he hotly inveighed), made capital out of the new "Coalition," calling Jenkinson Pitt's pedestal, and wittily declaring that he envied not the statue its pedestal or the pedestal its statue.[3] Other members, including Fox and Pitt, skilfully played with the simile, and thus beguiled the hours of these otherwise exhausting debates, which, we may note, caused Wilberforce to faint in the midst of his efforts to defend his chief.

The most brilliant, though not the least mischievous, speech of these debates was that of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. It is needless to dilate on the Celtic charm and vivacity of this great *littérateur*. Descended from an old Irish family, which gave to Swift one of his dearest friends, and to Dublin one of its leading actors and authors, he was born in 1751, doomed to sparkle. Educated at Harrow, and called to the Bar, he soon attracted attention by his speeches and still more by his plays. His "Rivals" and "School for Scandal" attested the versatility of his wit and the cynical geniality of his nature. In 1780 he made what was perhaps the chief mistake of his life in entering Parliament as member for Stafford; for his character was too volatile his satire too caustic, to ensure success except as a *frondeur*. Friendship with Fox condemned him almost entirely to this *rôle* and exaggerated the recklessness of his utterances. He was the Charles O'Malley of politics. When, therefore, that engaging political satire, "The Rolliad," appeared, in castigation of Rolle, the somewhat roisterous member for Devonshire, everyone attributed the poems to Sheridan; and his strenuous denial found little credence.[1]

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[1] T. Moore, "Life of Sheridan," i, 424.

[2] Wraxall, iv, 127-38.

[3] Lord Morley ("Burke," 125) allows that Burke was wrong in following Fox's factious opposition, and that he "allowed his political integrity to be bewildered."

One of the "Probationary Odes" amusingly hit off the alliance of Jenkinson with Pitt and the increase in the number of the Irish Propositions:

Lo! hand in hand advance th' enamour'd pair
This Chatham's son and that the drudge of Bute.
Proud of their mutual love
Like Nisus and Euryalus they move
To Glory's steepest heights together tend,
Each careless for himself, each anxious for his friend.

Chorus

Hail! most prudent Politicians!
Hail! correct Arithmeticians!
Hail! vast exhaustless source of Irish Propositions!

Elsewhere in dolorous strains the Muse

Sees fair Ierne rise from England's flame,
And build on British ruin Irish fame.[2]

In these witticisms we have the high-water mark of the achievements of the Opposition. Sheridan inveighed against the exaction of a contribution from Ireland towards the navy, and the re-imposition of the Navigation Laws (certainly the weakest part of Pitt's case), as implying a legislative inferiority from which she had escaped in 1782. He scoffed at the commercial boons as a mean and worthless bribe, and the whole scheme as "a fraud, cheat and robbery," fatal to the confidence of the Irish in the good faith of Britain. The playwright further exclaimed that it would be a misfortune if the Irish Parliament dared to pass the Resolutions, and that, as it was not by Parliament that the independence of Ireland had been obtained, so it was not by Parliament that it should be given up. This was tantamount to an invitation to the Irish Volunteers to renew their coercion of the Dublin Parliament; and it was now clear that Fox and his friends, in despair of defeating the proposals at Westminster, were seeking to wreck them at Dublin, if need be, at the cost of civil broils.

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[1] The actual authors of these amusing poems were Tickell, General Fitzpatrick, Lord John Townsend, Richardson, George Ellis, and Burke's friend and literary executor, Dr. Lawrence, who contributed the prose parts. (T. Moore, "Sheridan," i, 421.)

[2] "The Rolliad," 90, 370.

In this they succeeded. By substantial majorities Ministers carried the Irish Propositions at the end of May; and the Lords passed them on 18th July. But long before this the storm-centre had moved across St. George's Channel. Throughout the length and breadth of Ireland an outcry was raised against the state of ignominious dependence in which Ireland would be placed by the contribution now imposed on her for ever in return for greatly diminished advantages. Fox's telling phrase about the bartering of Irish liberty against British commerce was on every lip. The results were at once obvious. Though Pitt, with his usually sanguine forecast, had expressed the belief that the Dublin Parliament would be more manageable than that of Westminster, it set at naught all the Viceregal blandishments. Some of its members even taunted Pitt with acting treacherously towards Ireland throughout. Grattan, while refraining from this taunt, opposed the new scheme, especially clause iv and the perpetual contribution, in a speech which the Lord Lieutenant described to Pitt as "seditious and inflammatory to a degree scarcely credible." Flood excelled himself in recklessness; and in that body of usually subservient placemen, leave to bring in the Bill was granted only by a majority of nineteen (12th August).

In face of this storm-signal the Irish Government decided to furl their sails and come to anchor. The measure was deferred to another session; and of course was never heard of again. Considering the "very great clamour"[1] in the country, this was inevitable; and Dublin manifested its joy by a spontaneous and general illumination. Woodfall, an opponent of Pitt's policy, admitted to Eden that neither the populace nor the members could explain the cause of their recent fury or their present joy.[2]

[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 255. See ch. xii of this work for a new letter of Wilberforce to Pitt on the crisis.

[2] "Auckland Journals," i, 79.

The excitement soon abated; and it must be allowed that the popular party in Ireland did not adopt the hostile measures against British trade which might have been expected after the breakdown of these enlightened proposals. Lord Westmorland, during his viceroyalty five years later, admitted that complete harmony existed in the commercial relations of the two kingdoms.

This may have salved the wound which the events of 1785 dealt to Pitt. Up to the very end he had hoped for success in what had been the dearest object of his life. After hearing of the ominous vote of 12th August in Dublin, he wrote to the Marquis of Buckingham in the following manly terms:

Putney Heath, Aug. 17, 1785.[1]

MY DEAR LORD,

I have many thanks to return you for your letter. Grenville will probably send you the account we received to-day from Ireland, after a long period of suspense. The motion for bringing in a Bill has been carried only by 127 against 108; and such a victory undoubtedly partakes, for the present at least, of the nature of a defeat. A motion was announced for Monday last, declaratory against the 4th Resolution. The event of this motion seemed to be thought uncertain. The probable issue of all this seems to be that the settlement is put at some distance, but I still believe the principles of it too sound, not to find their way at last.

To the Duke of Rutland he also wrote in the same lofty spirit, using the words quoted at the head of this chapter, and adding that, when experience had brought more wisdom, "we shall see all our views realised in both countries and for the advantage of both."

Faith and courage such as this are never lost upon colleagues and subordinates, especially when they can rely on loyal support from their chief. Both to the Duke and to Orde Pitt now tendered his thanks for their tact and resolution in face of overwhelming difficulties, and thus manifested that kindliness and magnanimity which wins heartfelt devotion. For, as usually happens after defeat, envious surmises were rife. Some spiteful influence (probably that of the Marquis of Buckingham),[2] had sought to poison Pitt's mind against Orde as the chief cause of the failure in Dublin. As for Beresford, he believed that some of Pitt's colleagues had turned traitors. Lesser men might pry into corners to find petty causes for that heart-breaking collapse; but no such suspicions mar the dignity of Pitt's voluminous correspondence, a perusal of which enables the reader to understand why Orde once exclaimed: " I am so sensible of the manly and noble part which Mr. Pitt has acted, that I will die by inches in the cause of his support."[1]

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[1] Chevening MSS. Pitt continued to reside at the house on the north side of Putney Heath, next to Lord Ashburton's, until October or November 1785, when he removed to Holwood Hill, Kent.

[2] "Dropmore P.," i, 254; "Pitt-Rutland Corresp.," 125-33.

The real reason of failure, as Pitt clearly saw, was the determination of powerful factions in both kingdoms to wreck his proposals by representing each concession made to the sister-island as an injury or an insult, or both. At all times it is easier to fan to a flame the fears and jealousies of nations than to allay them; and in that age the susceptibilities both of Britons and Irishmen were highly inflammable. Twelve decades, marked by reforming efforts and closer intercourse, have softened the feelings then so easily aroused; and as we look back over efforts of conciliation, not yet crowned with complete success, we see no figure nobler and more pathetic than that of the statesman who struggled hard to bring together those hitherto alien peoples by the ties of interest and friendship; we see also few figures more sinister than those of his political opponents at Westminster who set themselves doggedly to the task of thwarting his efforts by means of slander and misrepresentation.

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[1] Ashbourne, 146.

CHAPTER XII

PITT AND HIS FRIENDS

(1783-94)

Keep thy friend
Under thy own life's key.
SHAKESPEARE, *All's Well that Ends Well.*

A crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymball where there is no love.—BACON.

SOME statesmen merit notice solely from the magnitude of their achievements; others attract attention by the charm of their personality. Pitt claims homage on both accounts. Accordingly I propose to devote this chapter to his private life and friendships during the early part of his career, beginning with the time when he laid down the Chancellorship of the Exchequer and fled to the house of his friend Wilberforce at Wimbledon. In the Diary of the latter we read this brief but suggestive entry: " April 3 [1783]. To Wimbledon, where Pitt, etc., dined and slept. Evening walk—to bed a little past two. April 4. Delicious day: lounged the morning at Wimbledon with friends: foining at night, and run about the garden for an hour or two."

We can picture the scene. Lauriston House, Wilberforce's abode on the south side of Wimbledon Common, is a spacious villa, comfortable in its eighteenth-century solidity, and scarcely changed since those days. One of the front bedrooms is known as " Mr. Pitt's room." There he would look forth on the Common, which had for him a peculiar charm. At the back, the south windows look upon an extensive lawn, bordered not too thickly by trees, under one of which, a maple, tradition says that he was wont to lounge away his Sunday mornings, to the distress of his host. At other times the garden was the scene of half riotous mirth. Pitt, Dudley Ryder, Pepper Arden, Tom

Steele, and Wilberforce there broke loose from the restraints of Westminster, and indulged in *foyning*. That old-English word, denoting thrusting or fencing, conjures up visions of quips and pranks such as Horace loved. Would that Pitt had had more time for these wholesome follies!

Imagine these youths, with the freshness of Cambridge still upon them, cheating the hours with fun. Pitt, the stately, austere leader of the House of Commons, who, on entering its precincts, fixed his eyes straight on his seat, and tilted his nose loftily in air during his State progress thither, with not so much as a nod to his supporters[1]—yet here, on the lawn of Lauriston House, is all fun and laughter, sharpening his wit against the edge of Wilberforce's fancy, answering jest with jest, quotation with quotation, in a fresh mingling of jollity and culture. As yet all is joyous in the lives of the friends. Wilberforce has inherited from an uncle an ample fortune along with Lauriston House, and adds rooms to it so as fitly to entertain the friends who always cluster about him. The woes of the slaves have not yet struck a chill to his life, and he lives amidst a buzz of friends and admirers. He reminds us of that character in Disraeli's "Lothair," who proved an irresistible magnet at every party—no one quite knew why; but every one sought to be next him. The magnetism of Wilberforce is easily intelligible; it lay in his lovable and gifted nature, which welled forth freely in genial anecdote, friendly parody, sparkling retort.

For Pitt, too, there were as yet no oppressive cares. True, at that time, there loomed before him the toilsome career of an impecunious barrister, but that did not daunt his serene and self-reliant nature. Doubtless the troubles of England moved him more, now that the prospect of peace with America and the half of Europe was overclouded by the triumph of Fox and North. But Pitt had that protective faculty, inherent in all great natures, of laying aside personal and even national cares in the company of his dearest friends, and it set him free for life-restoring mirth. Then, too, his nature, shy and stiff to mere acquaintances, blossomed forth radiantly to a chosen circle, such as he found at Wimbledon. Here, then, was seen the real man. Away went the mask of official reserve, which prudence compelled him to wear at Westminster as a defence against his seniors. Here, among youths and friends, his pranks were startling. One of them must be told in the words of Wilberforce: "We found one morning the fruits of Pitt's earlier rising in the careful sowing of the garden beds with the fragments of a dress-hat in which Dudley Ryder had overnight come down from the opera."

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[1] Wraxall, iii, 217.

Would that we knew more of those bright days! For Pitt the man, not Pitt the statesman, is seen at Wimbledon. The pillar of State, columnar in its Doric austerity, becomes a lithe facile form, twined about with social graces, gay with the flowers of friendship. The hours of recreation, rather than those spent in the office, reveal the inner life. Alas! the self-revealing episodes in the life of Pitt are hidden from us. None of his friends was a Boswell. Wilberforce, who might have been the enlightener, was troubled by defective eyesight, which curtailed his correspondence; and his Diary is a series of tantalizing jottings, a veritable Barmecide feast. As for Pitt's relatives, they never drew him out of himself. Lord Chatham, though a good talker in general company, seems to have exerted on his younger brother a slightly chilling influence; and their letters were fraternally business-like. We therefore search in vain for those lighter traits of character, those sparkles of wit, which enlivened the joyous years 1783-5. This side of Pitt's character is little more known to us than are the hidden regions of the moon. We wish to know it all the more because it is not the frozen but the sunny side of his being.

Failing to catch more than one sportive echo of those glad times, the chronicler falls back on mere externals, such as Pitt's occasional reluctance to attend the parish church at Wimbledon, or his fondness for fishing in Lord Spencer's lake on the lower land east of the Common. Clearly the neighbourhood must have attracted him; for in August 1784 he leased the house next to Lord Ashburton's, on the north side of Putney Heath, scarcely two miles distant from the abode of Wilberforce. He resided there up to the autumn of 1785, when the opportunity of buying the house at Holwood drew him to the scenes of his boyhood, near Hayes, in Kent. Nevertheless the Surrey Common was to win him back. For, during his last term of office, he purchased Bowling Green House, on the old Portsmouth road, near the middle of that beautiful space.

There it was that he fought his duel with Tierney on Whitsunday 1798. There, too, he breathed his last, on 23rd January 1806. In the dark days that followed on the news of Austerlitz, his thoughts turned with one final flicker of hope towards the news which he expected from his special envoy to Berlin, the Earl of Harrowby, formerly Dudley Ryder. The news proved to be heart-breaking. But fancy persists in wondering whether, perchance, during the time of waiting, the dauntless spirit did not for a brief space fling off the thraldom of the present and flit across the open to dwell with fond remembrance on that spring sowing of the flower-beds of his friend Wilberforce.[1]

After the severe disappointments of the session of 1785, the signs of friskiness vanish from the life of Pitt. Up to that time his hopefulness is of almost boyish intensity. Confidence in himself, and in the goodness of his cause, and determination to carry out a work of national revival, lead him to grapple with great enterprises in a way that astonishes friends and baffles opponents. The nation having given him a mandate in 1784, he hopes to solve the most urgent of existing problems. They are the restoration of public credit, the reduction of the National Debt, the reform of Parliament, the subordination of the East India Company to the control of Parliament, the opening up of freer trade not only with Ireland but also with France, and the preservation of peace, so that, as he phrased it—"Let peace continue for five years, and we shall again look any Power in Europe in the face."[2]

Here was a programme which transcended anything previously seen. But to it were added the many unforeseen events and problems that provide a full stock in trade for an ordinary parliamentary leader. The Warren Hastings affair alone would have occupied a whole session under a quiescent Minister; and we may here note that Pitt's conscientious treatment of it, as a matter on which Ministers and members must vote according to their convictions, tended to relax the bonds of party discipline to a dangerous extent.

Indeed, there is only one of his important actions during the first years of power that needs apology. This is the persistence with which he pressed against Fox the demand for a complete scrutiny of the Westminster election. Despite the fact that that wearisome and very expensive inquiry brought to light few bad votes, and did not exclude Fox from Parliament (for as we saw, he sat as Member for Orkney), the Prime Minister refused to put an end to "this cursed business," as Pulteney termed it,[1] until his own supporters compelled him to desist. How are we to explain this conduct? It led to waste of time and temper in Parliament, besides annoying many of his friends, and straining to breaking-point the allegiance of his composite majority. There can be no doubt that he committed a blunder, and one which Englishmen detest; for his conduct seemed ungenerous to a beaten foe and a violation of the unwritten rules of fair-play.

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[1] Wilberforce gave up Lauriston House in 1786. A little later Dundas and Grenville came to reside at Wimbledon, on the east and west sides of the Green. Grenville's is now called Eagle House. Dundas's stood on the site of "Canizzaro."

[2] "Pitt-Rutland Corresp.," 111.

Nevertheless, it is likely that he acted, not from rancour, not from a desire to ban his enemy, least of all under any dictation from Windsor (of this I have found no sign), but rather from the dictates of political morality. That there had been trumping up of false votes was notorious; for the votes polled exceeded the total number of voters; and Pitt, as the champion of purity at elections, may have deemed it his duty to probe the sore to the bottom. In these days an avowed champion of Reform would be praised for such conduct. In that age he was condemned; and it was certainly tactless to single out Fox from among the many candidates for whom corrupt practices had been used. Such an act appeared the outcome of personal pique, not of zeal for electoral purity. So at least men looked on it in the spring of 1785. Pulteney, Wraxall, and the ordinary ruck of members failed to see anything but personal motives in the whole affair.[2] Fox, who always gauged the temper of the House aright, carried it with him when he protested that he had little expected to find Pitt acting as the agent of the Crown in his persecution; that it was clearly the aim of the Ministry to ruin him, for he was a poor man. "Yet," he added, "in such a cause I will lay down my last shilling. If ultimately I lose my election, it will be for want of money, not from want of a legal majority of votes, while Westminster will be deprived of its franchise because I am unable to prosecute a pecuniary contest with the Treasury."

This is the most effective type of parliamentary speech

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[1] "Rutland P.," iii, 177.

[2] *Ibid.*, 178; Wraxall, iv, 78-9, 98.

It avoided all reference to the abstract principles which were at stake, and it appealed with telling force to the sporting instincts of squires. Little wonder is it that Pitt's followers went over to the side which seemed to stand for fair play to a poor man in his contest with a spiteful bureaucracy. A few days later Pitt could muster only a majority of nine (21st February 1785), and this clearly foreshadowed the end of the scrutiny, which came with a vote hostile to Ministers on 3rd March. On a subordinate motion, six days later, several malcontents returned to their allegiance, thus proving, in Wraxall's words, that "they wished to control and restrain, but had no desire to overturn, the Administration."[1]

This affair deserves mention here because it illustrates what was the chief weakness of Pitt. His secluded childhood, his education apart from other youths, even at Cambridge, his shyness in general company, and his decided preference for the society of a few friends, gave him very few opportunities for knowing ordinary men. He therefore was slow in understanding the temper of the House, and he never gained what we may call the Palmerston touch. Well would it have been for him if he had mixed more with men and shown towards members of the House the affability with which Fox and North charmed friends and foes alike. But, like Peel, Pitt had neither parliamentary graces nor small talk for the lobby. In truth he was too shy or too proud to unbend with ease. Or rather he did so only in a circle of friends or among his juniors. Then his sense of fun could go to surprising lengths, witness that historic romp when Lady Hester Stanhope, two of her younger brothers, and young William Napier (the future historian) managed to get him down and blacken his face. In the midst of their jubilant triumph there came a knock at the door. Two Ministers were announced as desirous of taking his commands on some question. For a few minutes State business stood still until the Prime Minister shook off his assailants and washed his face for the interview. Then the boys marvelled more at the change of manner than of colour. The Prime Minister threw up his chin, loftily inquired the cause of the visit, imparted his decision, stiffly dismissed the Ministers—and resumed the romp.[2] Clearly there were two Pitts.

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[1] Wraxall, iv, 98.

[2] Bruce, "Life of Sir W. Napier," i, 28; quoted by Lecky, v, 16.

His rather stilted manners at Westminster were doubtless a reflection—a lunar reflection—of the melodramatic splendours of his father. Never was a colleague or a subordinate introduced to Chatham's presence until the effects of light were Rembrandtesque, and the telling phrase had been coined. But where the father triumphed by the force of his personality, the son only half succeeded. For he was more a Grenville than a Pitt, and he inherited from that family some of its congenital stiffness. Hence the efforts which the son put forth, as if with the aim of fulfilling the precept of St. Paul to Timothy—"Let no man despise thy youth"—were calculated, not to impress beholders, but rather to freeze them.

Far different was the easy good nature of Fox, which often salved the wounds inflicted in the course of debate. It is said that Lord North, after one of the debates on the American War, in which Fox had mercilessly belaboured one of the Ministers, good-humouredly remarked to the orator, "You were in fine feather to-night, Charles; I am glad that it was not my turn to be fallen upon." Fox, we may add, reciprocated these sentiments. However he might threaten North with impeachment, he was ready in private to shake him by the hand; and shortly before the fall of that Minister he publicly asked his pardon for offending him by his tremendous indictment, adding that he meant it not. To us this sounds unreal. Either the indictment against the author of the nation's ruin was not quite sincere, or the apology was hollow. Pitt, with his exceptionally high standard of truthfulness,[1] could not have tendered it. Fox did; and Wraxall praised his conduct, adding that Pitt was less placable, and was wanting in those frank, winning, open ways which made friends and retained them through adversity.[2]

This rather superficial verdict—for Wraxall knew Pitt only very slightly—summed up the views of the easy-going mass, which cares nothing for principles, little for measures, and very much for men, provided that they keep up the parliamentary game according to the old rules and in a sportsmanlike way. It must always be remembered that few members of Parliament took their duties seriously, and looked on the debates mainly as a change from the life of the other fashionable clubs. To such an assembly the political philosophy of Burke was foolishness, and the lofty principles of Pitt, mere Pharisaism. Its ideal would have been Esau, provided that he had held fast to the customs of primogeniture.

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[1] "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 69.

[2] Wraxall, ii, 234, 235.

We have little or nothing that directly shows the impression produced on Pitt by his discovery of the shallowness and fickleness of his supporters. Perhaps it intensified his natural shyness and awkwardness of manner, which Wilberforce assures us were very great. Certainly he did not mix more with men. "Pitt does not make friends" is a significant entry in Wilberforce's Diary for March 1785.[1] This inability to make a wide circle of friends was not incompatible with those rarer gifts which link a man closely to those with whom he had real kinship of spirit. If we may read Shakespeare's thoughts into the well-known words of Polonius to Laertes, the poet supremely admired a man who inspired the few with ardent affection and held the many at arm's length. In regard to character, then, we may honour Pitt for the very characteristic which to men like Wraxall seemed a blemish.

Nevertheless, it was a serious failing in a parliamentary tactician. Onlookers, who saw only the cold and reserved exterior, described Pitt as the embodiment of egotism and pride. His friends knew full well that he was the soul of kindness. Dundas and Wilberforce testify to his affable behaviour to subordinates, his fund of good temper, which was proof even against contradiction and the advent of bad news. Wilberforce mentions a case in point. Pitt had long been ruminating on some revenue proposal, and at length mentioned it to the Attorney-General, only to learn that there would be grave legal objections to the scheme; far from showing annoyance, he received the announcement "with the most unruffled good-humour," and, giving up his plan, "pursued his other business as cheerfully and pleasantly as usual."[2]

It is not thus that a proud and egotistical nature sees his castle vanish into air. Anecdotes such as this have been known only since the year 1897. Now we know the real Pitt; the men of these times saw only the professional mask; and therefore we find exclamations like that of Sir Gilbert Elliot who, after hearing the almost inspired speech of Pitt on the abolition of the slave-trade, remarked: "One felt almost to like the man";[1] or again Lady Anne Hamilton in her "Memoirs of the Court of George III," asserted that Pitt was always cold and carried his frostiness even into his carouses.

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[1] "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 65; "Life of Wilberforce," i, 78.

[2] "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 66, 67.

This certainly was the general belief. In one particular Pitt's behaviour often gave colour to the charge of pride or egotism. His letters were as stiff as his parliamentary attitudes. Worst of all, he very often left letters unanswered; and this applied not merely to begging letters, against which silence is a Prime Minister's panoply, but even to important matters of State. We find Eden, in the midst of the commercial negotiations with France, writing from Paris in despairing terms about the Prime Minister's silence, and finally suggesting that all his letters of the last fortnight must have sunk in the Channel. Sir James Harris, too, when fighting an unequal battle against the French party in Holland, begged Pitt to send a few lines to encourage the hard pressed friends of England. For four months not a line came; and at last Harris begged Carmarthen to cajole a letter out of his chief: "Is it impossible to move him, *who speaks* so well, to write one poor line to these sound shillings and pence men?"[2] The excuse doubtless was, that Pitt was overworked in Parliament (as indeed he stated to Eden);[3] but, even with the then scanty facilities for dealing with a vast correspondence, he should certainly have handled it with more method and tact. Careless correspondents will readily conjecture how much a Prime Minister may harm his prospects by subjecting friends and foes alike to a peculiarly annoying slight.

Pitt, then, owed little or nothing to social graces; and Horace Walpole gave a very superficial judgement, when, in his companion sketches of Pitt and Fox, he stated that the former "cultivated friends to form a party." On the contrary, he harmed his party by cooling his friends.

The men who most helped Pitt to keep in touch with his following were Dundas, Grenville, and Jenkinson. They did not, as Wraxall avers, hold the first place in his confidence. That was still held by Wilberforce; and to their friendship we may apply the apt remark of Montaigne, that the amity which possesses and sways the soul cannot be double. For political reasons Pitt after the year 1784 came into closer contact with his subalterns, among whom Dundas and Grenville claim notice.

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[1] "Life and Letters of the Earl of Minto," ii, 5.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 28061. This postscript to Harris's letter of 18th July 1786 to Carmarthen is omitted from "The Malmesbury Diaries"; so, too are most personal touches, often of great interest.

[3] "Auckland Journals," i, 117.

Henry Dundas (1742-1811), a younger son of the Right Honourable Robert Dundas, Lord President of the Scottish Court of Session, and of Anne Gordon of Invergordon, was born at Edinburgh, where he was educated first at school, then in the University. The atmosphere in which he grew up was strictly legal; and his ancestry, no less than his upbringing, seemed to fit him for success at the Bar, at which he appeared in 1763. His rise was rapid, and in 1774 he entered Parliament as member for Midlothian. At Westminster he attached himself to North's party and became known as a hard worker and hard hitter. United as these powers were with a manly presence, genial gifts, and the full fund of Scottish shrewdness, he acquired favour and became Lord Advocate. Grace and persuasiveness of speech he lacked; a harsh voice, a still harsher accent, and awkward gestures told against him; but above these defects he rose triumphant, thanks to indomitable courage, which enabled him unabashed to bear the heaviest blows of debate. Napoleon once expressed his admiration of Blücher, because, however badly he was beaten, "the old devil" came up again as though nothing had happened. So it was with Dundas in his many encounters with Fox. He might be repulsed but never routed. His features were bold and handsome, and, if they were "tinged with convivial purple," that perhaps enhanced their charm. For the House loved a *bon vivant*, who entertained with lairdly lavishness and had good store, not only of wine, but of broad stories.

Wraxall, while admitting Dundas's appearance to be "manly and advantageous," avers that his conviviality was part of a deep-laid scheme for managing men and tightening his grip on the Administration; for "never did any man conceal deeper views of every kind under the appearance of careless inattention to self-interest." The same insinuation is wittily conveyed by the authors of "The Rolliad" in a skit on the Cabinet Meetings which Dundas was supposed to hold in his villa. "March 9th, 1787. Got Thurlow to dine with us at Wimbledon—gave him my best Burgundy and blasphemy to put him into good humour. After a brace of bottles ventured to drop a hint of business. Thurlow cursed me, and asked Pitt for a sentiment. Pitt looked foolish, Grenville wise. Mulgrave stared. Sydney's chin lengthened. Tried the effect of another bottle. Pitt began a long speech on the subject of our meeting. Sydney fell asleep by the fire"—and so on.

In one respect Dundas was the great political agent of the age. He managed Scotland, so thoroughly, indeed, that he has been termed "the foremost Scotsman of the eighteenth century."[1] No civilian since the time of John Knox has ever controlled the energies of that people so thoroughly as Henry Dundas. What the great Reformer achieved by an appeal to their highest aspirations, the party manipulator achieved by an appeal to the purse. Since the collapse of the Stuart cause material interests had been paramount; and their deadening effect on national character appears in the political torpor which lay upon Scotland until the strident call of the French Revolution awakened her. The men north of the Tweed had even more reason than Englishmen to desire Parliamentary Reform; for, as will be seen in a later chapter, in all Scotland there were only 1303 electors; and these returned 45 members as against 44 who misrepresented Cornwall. But so long as the Scots slumbered, it mattered not whether they had 45 members or 4; for the return of 45, and their course of conduct at Westminster were alike prescribed by Dundas. The soporific fruit which drugged the Scottish people and kept their representatives close to his heel was "patronage." Dundas it was who dispensed all important prizes both in Church and State. Valuable livings at home, lucrative posts in India or speedy advancement in the navy, these and many other rewards were in his hands. His influence at the Admiralty and at the India Board of Control was immense; he worked hard for his men; and it may be admitted that his choice of officials, especially for India, was often sound. Certain it is that he opened up golden avenues to hundreds of poor Scottish families, so that he was often hailed as the benefactor of his people.

In one respect Dundas conferred a substantial boon. He persuaded Pitt to extinguish the embers of hatred to the reigning dynasty which still smouldered in the Highlands, by restoring the estates that were confiscated after the "Forty-five." By this act of clemency Pitt and Dundas linked their names to the work of reconciliation so tactfully begun by Chatham, and helped to foster the sentiment of British nationality, which bore a rich harvest on the fields of Salamanca and Waterloo. It is not surprising, then, that Dundas had the small governing clique in Scotland entirely at his beck and call. One of his forty-five henchmen at Westminster, Ferguson of Pitfour, frankly stated that he had never heard a speech which had influenced his vote, and that there was only one defect in Dundas's leadership, namely, that he was not quite tall enough to enable his followers readily to see into which lobby he was going at division-time.[1]

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[1] Omond, G. W. T., "The Lord Advocates of Scotland," ch. xiv.

Even so, the magnetic influence of Dundas upon the obedient Caledonian squad was a political asset of no small worth. Not seldom could the laird of Melville decide the fate of Cabinets by throwing his forty-five votes into this or that scale. He himself was fully aware of his importance; for in a letter which he wrote to Grenville early in 1789, he declined another official post because in his present position (or positions) he was "a cement of political strength to the present Administration," the dissolution of which might be ruinous. The words are instinct, not only with the Scottish canniness, but with Scottish loyalty. In truth, the staunchness of Dundas's friendship to Pitt suffices to refute those critics, both of his own and later times, who speak of him as of a political Vicar of Bray. In his early days his trimming propensities were often disagreeably prominent; and the speech in which he hailed the rising sun of Pitt, and slighted the waning orb of North, was quite characteristic of the earlier half of his career.[2] But, for him as for some others, the splendour of Pitt's genius, and the glow of his pure patriotism, inaugurated a brighter future; and he might well say of his tergiversation at that time what Talleyrand said of his still more numerous changes of front: "I have never deserted a party before it deserted itself." While recognizing in this new ally great powers of work, and still greater powers of "influence," Pitt did not at once give him his whole confidence; and we shall probably not be far wrong in inferring that only after the disillusionment of the spring of 1785, did "Henry VIIIth of Scotland" become his counsellor on matters of the highest moment. Thenceforth his influence over Pitt steadily increased, while that of Wilberforce somewhat waned; and we find the latter declaring at a later time that Pitt's connection with Dundas was his "great misfortune," a remark which applied mainly to the slavery question.[1] It is, however, still more applicable to Dundas's conduct of the war, when, as we shall see, his absorption in other work, and his utter inexperience of military affairs, should have made him backward in giving advice. Far from that, he was for some time the guiding spirit; and from his seat at the Home Office or the India Board, or from his suburban villa, he dashed off orders of momentous import, which were to gladden the heart of Carnot.

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[1] Porritt, "Unreformed House of Commons," ii, 8.

[2] Wraxall, ii, 123.

Such, then, was the man at whose house, on the west side of Wimbledon Common, Pitt was a frequent visitor. There the conviviality was unrestrained by those scruples which more and more prevailed at Wilberforce's abode hard by; and after the latter gave up that villa, in the autumn of 1786, the associations of Pitt with Wimbledon are somewhat vinous. Both Pitt and Dundas were hard drinkers. The former frequently tossed off several tumblers of port wine before a great speech in the House of Commons; and it would seem, if rumour spoke truly, that at Dundas's the potations were long and deep. It must not, however, be supposed that Pitt performed no serious work there. The long and important despatches which he wrote at Wimbledon show the contrary; and their contents prove them to have been written before the Bacchic pleasures, which men of that age deemed the appropriate close of a busy day. Only once did the pleasures of dessert at Dundas's cause Pitt and his host to compromise themselves in public. But on one occasion they came to the House of Commons obviously the worse for liquor. The occasion was equally remarkable. It was on the acceptance of the French Declaration of War, in February 1793. Fox generously forebore from taking advantage of his rival's incapacity,[2] but the situation was hit off in the following lines:

I cannot see the Speaker, Hal, can you?
What! Cannot see the Speaker, I see two.

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 179, 233, 350, 351; also iii, 212, for the decline of Dundas's influence on Pitt. Omond, "Lord Advocates of Scotland," vol. ii, ch. xiv.

[2] Lord Macaulay told this to Earl Stanhope (author of the "Life of Pitt") at the British Museum in December 1846 (Note of Earl Stanhope in the Chevening MSS.).

A man so frank and intriguing, so subtle and pugnacious as Dundas, is fair game for the satirist; and it is not surprising that the Whig rhymsters who compiled the "Rolliad" scourged the factotum of Caledonia:

> Whose exalted soul
> No bonds of vulgar prejudice control.
> Of shame unconscious in his bold career
> He spurns that honour which the weak revere;
> For, true to public Virtue's patriot plan,
> He loves the *Minister* and not the *Man*.
> Alike the advocate of North and Wit,
> The friend of Shelburne and the guide of Pitt,
> His ready tongue with sophistries at will
> Can say, unsay, and be consistent still.

This is, of course, the effusion of unscrupulous party hacks; but it shows the skill with which the enemies of Dundas seized on the weak points in his career. As a matter of fact, few men have worked harder than the future Viscount Melville, and on few men has fortune at the close pressed more unkindly.

William Wyndham Grenville (1759-1834) is a less interesting man than Dundas. First cousin to Pitt, and born in the same year, he seemed destined to advance hand in hand with him, just as his father had signally helped Chatham in certain parts of that meteoric career. Nature, however, had clearly designed the Grenvilles, both father and son, not to be comets, scarcely planets, but rather satellites. The traditional pride of the Grenvilles (in which Pitt was by no means lacking) appeared in William Grenville, blended with a freezing manner, the effect of which was enhanced by his heavy features and stiff carriage. To counterbalance these defects, he was dowered with an upright and virtuous disposition, great industry, a choice store of classical learning, good sense, though not illuminated by imagination, and oratorical gifts, which, if neither majestic nor pleasing, partook of his native solidity. As Paymaster of the Forces (conjointly with Lord Mulgrave) he did useful work, the higher branches of which involved questions of foreign policy.

Pitt's appreciation of his sound sense appeared in his choice of Grenville for very delicate diplomatic missions to The Hague and Paris in the crisis of 1787. The evenness of his judgement and temper procured him the Speakership of the House of

Commons in 1789, after the death of Cornwall. From this honourable post he was soon transferred to more congenial duties, as Secretary of State, and entered the Upper House as Lord Grenville. In 1791 he became Secretary for Foreign Affairs, his conduct of which will engage our attention later on. Here we may note that in all his undertakings he gained a reputation for soundness; and if the neutral tints of his character procured for him neither the enthusiastic love of friends nor the hatred of foes, he won the respect of all. The envious railers who penned the "Rolliad" could fasten on nothing worse than his solidity—

> A youth who boasts no common share of head.
> What plenteous stores of knowledge may contain
> The spacious tenement of Grenville's brain!
> Nature, in all her dispensations wise,
> Who formed his head-piece of so vast a size,
> Hath not, 'tis true, neglected to bestow
> Its due proportion to the part below.

Unfortunately, though Grenville could manage business, he could not manage men; and at this point he failed to make good a defect in the political panoply of Pitt. On neither of the cousins had nature bestowed the social tact which might have smoothed the rubs of diplomatic discussion, say, in those with the French envoy, Chauvelin, in 1792. That fervid royalist, Hyde de Neuville, complained bitterly of the freezing powers of Downing Street. The enthusiastic young Canning found it impossible to work with Grenville, who was also on strained terms with Dundas. The "inner Cabinet," composed of Pitt, Grenville, Dundas, must have been the scene of many triangular duels; and it needed all the mental and moral superiority of Pitt (as to which every one bears witness) to preserve even the appearance of harmony between seconds who were alike opinionated, obstinate, and covetous of patronage.[1] On the whole, the personality of Grenville must rank among the dullest of that age. I have found no striking phrase which glitters amidst the leaden mass of his speeches and correspondence. His life has never been written. He would be a very conscientious zealot who would undertake it.

Turning to the central figure of the group, we have once more to mourn the lack of information about those smaller details which light up traits of character. Few of Pitt's letters refer to his private affairs in the years 1784-86; and the knowledge which we have of them is largely inferential. Even the secondary sources fared badly; for it seems that Pitt's housemaid made a holocaust of the many letters which Wilberforce wrote to him during his foreign tour in 1785.[1] In the Pitt Papers there is only one letter of Wilberforce of this period; and as it throws light on their friendship and the anxiety felt by Pitt's friends at the time of the Irish Propositions, I print it here almost *in extenso*.[2]

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 292, 516, 590-2; "Dropmore P.," iii, 167.

Lausanne, 2nd Aug., 1785.

MY DEAR PITT,

. . . If I were to suffer myself to think on politics, I should be very unhappy at the accounts I hear from all quarters: nothing has come from any great authority; but all the reports, such as they are, are of one tendency. I repose myself with confidence on you, being sure that you have spirit enough not to be deterred by difficulties if you can carry your point thro'; and trusting that you will have that greater degree of spirit which is requisite to make a person give up at once when the bad consequences which would follow his going on are at a distance. Yet I cannot help being extremely anxious: your own character, as well as the welfare of the country are at stake; but we may congratulate ourselves that they are here inseparably connected. In the opinion of unprejudiced men I do not think you will suffer from adjourning the Irish propositions *ad calendas Graecas*, if the state of Ireland makes it dangerous to proceed and you can make it evident you had good reason to bring them on, which I think you can. At the worst, the consequences on this side are only that you suffer (the Country may suffer too, but I am taking for granted this is the lesser evil); but I tremble and look forward to what may happen if the Irish Parliament should pass the propositions, and the Irish nation refuse to accept them; nor would it be one struggle only; but as often as any Bill should come over from our House of Commons to be passed in theirs, which was obnoxious, there would be a fresh opportunity for reviving it, especially as you have an Opposition to deal with as unprincipled and mischievous as ever embroiled the affairs of any country. God bless you, my dear Pitt and carry you thro' all your difficulties! You may reckon yourself most fortunate in that chearfulness of mind which enables you every now and then to throw off your load for a few hours and rest yourself. I fancy it must have been this which, when I am with you, prevents my considering you as an object of compassion, tho' Prime Minister of England; for now, when I am at a distance, out of hearing of your foyning, and your (illegible) other proofs of a light heart, I cannot help representing you to myself as oppressed with cares and troubles, and what I feel for you is more, I believe, than even Pepper feels in the moments of his greatest anxiety; and what can I say more? . . .

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 78.

[2] Pitt MSS., 189.

Pepper Arden, to whom Wilberforce here refers, scarcely lived up to his name. His character and his countenance alike lacked distinction. The latter suffered from the want of a nose, or at least, of an effectively imposing feature. What must this have meant in a generation which remembered the effect produced by Chatham's "terrifying beak," and was dominated by the long and concave curve on which Pitt suspended the House of Commons! Further, Pepper lacked dignity. His manner was noisy and inelegant.[1] He pushed himself forward as a Cambridge friend of Pitt; and the House resented the painful efforts of this flippant young man to run in harness by the side of the genius. Members roared with laughter when Arden marched in, at Christmastide of 1783, to announce that Pitt, as Prime Minister of the Crown, would offer himself for re-election. The effrontery of the statement was heightened by the voice and bearing of the speaker. Nevertheless, Pitt, as we have seen, made him Attorney-General. No appointment called forth more criticism. He entered the peerage as Lord Alvanley.

It is the characteristic of genius to attract and inspire the young; and Pitt's influence on them was second only to that of Chatham. As we shall see later on, Canning caught the first glow of political enthusiasm from the kindling gaze of the young Prime Minister. Patriotism so fervid, probity so spotless, eloquence so moving fired cooller natures than Canning's; and among the most noteworthy of those who now came forward was Henry Addington. His father, Anthony Addington, had started life as a medical man in Reading, and afterwards in Bedford Row, London, where Henry was born in 1754. In days when that profession held a lower place than at present, this fact was to be thrown in the teeth of the son on becoming Prime Minister. Chatham, however, always treated his family physician (for such Addington became) with chivalrous courtesy. Largely by the care of the doctor William Pitt was coaxed into maturity after his "wan" youth.[1] It was natural, then, that the sons should become acquainted, especially as young Addington, after passing through Winchester School and Brasenose College, Oxford, entered at Lincoln's Inn while Pitt was still keeping his terms there.

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[1] Wraxall, iv, 151.

Considering the community of their studies and tastes, it is singular that few, if any, of their letters of this period survive. Such as have come down to us are the veriest scraps. Here, then, as elsewhere, some evil destiny (was it Bishop Tomline?) must have intervened to blot out the glimpses of the social side of the statesman's life. It is clear, however, that Pitt must have begun to turn Addington's thoughts away from Chancery Lane to Westminster; for the latter in 1783 writes eagerly against "the offensive Coalition of Fox and North." At Christmas, when Pitt leaped to office as Prime Minister, he sought to bring Addington into the political arena, and held out the prospect of some subordinate post. Addington accordingly stood for Devizes, and was chosen by a unanimous vote at the hustings in April 1784. Nevertheless, his cool and circumspect nature rose slowly to the height of the situation at Westminster. Externals were all in his favour. His figure was tall and well proportioned; his features, faultlessly regular, were lit up by a benevolent smile; and his deferential manners gave token of success either as family physician or family attorney. In fine, a man who needed only the spur of ambition, or the stroke of calamity, to achieve a respectable success. It is said that Pitt early bade him fix his gaze on the Speaker's chair, to which, in fact, he helped him in 1789, after Grenville's retirement. But, for the present, nothing stirred Addington's nature from its exasperating calm. As worldly inducements failed, Pitt finally made trial of poetry. During a ride together to Pitt's seat at Holwood, the statesman sought in vain to appeal to his ambition; but Addington—five years his senior, be it remembered—pleaded the disqualifying effects of early habits and disposition. Thereupon Pitt burst out with the following passage from Waller's poem on Henrietta Maria:

> The lark that shuns on lofty boughs to build
> Her humble nest, lies silent in the field;

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[1] Pellew, "Life of Lord Sidmouth," i, 4.

But should the promise of a brighter day,
Aurora smiling, bid her rise and play,
Quickly she'll show 'twas not for want of voice,
Or power to climb, she made so low a choice;
Singing she mounts; her airy notes are stretch'd
Towards heaven, as if from heaven alone her notes she fetch'd.

Then the statesman set spurs to his horse and left Addington far behind.[1] It is curious that when Addington's ambition was fully aroused, it proved to be an obstacle to Pitt and a danger to the country in the crisis of 1803-4.

Adverting now to certain details of Pitt's private life, we notice that he varied the time of his first residence on Putney Heath (August 1784-November 1785) by several visits to Brighthelmstone, perhaps in order to shake off the fatigue and disappointment attendant on his Irish and Reform policy. At that seaside resort he spent some weeks in the early autumn of 1785, enjoying the society of his old Cambridge friends, "Bob" Smith (afterwards Lord Carrington), Pratt (afterwards Lord Camden), and Steele. We can imagine them riding along the quaint little front, or on the downs, their interchange of thought and sallies of wit probably helping in no small degree the invigorating influences of sea air and exercise. If we may trust the sprightly but spiteful lines in one of the "Political Eclogues," it was at Brighton that Pitt at these times especially enjoyed the society of "Tom" Steele, whom he had made Secretary of the Treasury conjointly with George Rose. Unlike his colleague, whose visage always bore signs of the care and toil of his office, Steele was remarkable for the rotundity and joviality of his face and an inexhaustible fund of animal spirits.[2] Perhaps it was this which attracted Pitt to him in times of recreation. The lines above referred to occur in an effusion styled—"Rose, or the Complaint,"—where the hard working colleague is shown as bemoaning Pitt's preference for Steele:

But vain his hope to shine in Billy's eyes,
Vain all his votes, his speeches, and his lies.
Steele's happier claims the boy's regard engage,
Alike their studies, nor unlike their age:
With Steele, companion of his vacant hours,
Oft would he seek Brighthelmstone's sea-girt towers;

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[1] Pellew, "Life of Lord Sidmouth," i, 38.

[2] Wraxall, iii, *ad fin.*

For Steele relinquish Beauty's trifling talk,
With Steele each morning ride, each evening walk;
Or in full tea-cups drowning cares of state
On gentler topics urge the mock debate.

However much Pitt enjoyed Steele's company on occasions like these, he did not allow his feelings to influence him when a question of promotion arose. Steele's talents being only moderate, his rise was slow, but he finally became one of the Paymasters of the Forces. In that station his conduct was not wholly satisfactory; and Pitt's friendship towards him cooled, though it was renewed not long before the Prime Minister's death.

For George Rose, on the other hand, despite his lack of joviality, Pitt cherished an ever deepening regard proportioned to the thoroughness and tactfulness of his services at the Treasury. In view of the vast number of applications for places and pensions, of which, moreover, Burke's Economy Bill had lessened the supply, the need of firm control at the Treasury is obvious; and Pitt and the country owed much to the man who for sixteen years held the purse-strings tight.[1] On his part Rose felt unwavering enthusiasm for his chief from the time of their first interview in Paris in 1783 until the dark days that followed Austerlitz. Only on two subjects did he refuse to follow Pitt, namely, on Parliamentary Reform, from which he augured "the most direful consequences," and the Slavery Question. That he ventured twice to differ decidedly from Pitt (in spite of earnest private appeals) proves his independence of mind as well as the narrowness of his outlook. He even offered to resign his post at the Treasury owing to their difference on Reform, but Pitt negatived this proposal. We need not accept his complacent statement that Pitt later on came over decidedly to his opinion on that topic.[2]

The tastes of the two friends were very similar, especially in their love of the country; and it was in the same month (September 1785) that each bought a small estate. We find Pitt writing at that time to Wilberforce respecting his purchase of "Holwood Hill," near Bromley, Kent, and stating that Rose had just bought an estate in the New Forest, which he vowed was "just breakfasting distance from town." "We are all turning country gentlemen very fast," added the statesman. A harassing session like that of 1785 is certain to set up a centrifugal tendency; and we may be sure that the nearness of Holwood to Hayes was a further attraction. Not that Pitt was as yet fond of agriculture. He had neither the time nor the money to spare for the high farming which was then yearly adding to the wealth of the nation. But he inherited Chatham's love of arranging an estate, and he was now to find the delight of laying out grounds, planting trees and shrubs and watching their growth. Holwood had many charms—"a most beautiful spot, wanting nothing but a house fit to live in"—so he described it to Wilberforce.[1] He moved into his new abode on 5th November 1785, and during the rest of the vacation spent most of his time there, residing at Downing Street only on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Many affairs of State were decided at parties at Holwood, or, later on, at Dundas's villa at Wimbledon.

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[1] I distrust the charges of corrupt dealing brought against Rose respecting the next election at Westminster.

[2] "Diaries of George Rose," i, 32-37.

Pitt admitted to Wilberforce that the purchase of Holwood was a piece of folly; and this was soon apparent to all Pitt's friends who had old-fashioned notions of making both ends meet. That desirable result had rarely, if ever, been attained by the son of the magnificent Chatham. Sparing for the nation's exchequer, Pitt was prodigal of his own. The aristocratic *hauteur*, of which all but his friends complained, led him to disregard the peccadilloes of servants and the overcharges of tradesmen. A bachelor Prime Minister, whose nose is high in air, is good sport for parasites; and even before the purchase of Holwood, Pitt was in difficulties. During one of the visits to Brighthelmstone, "Bob" Smith undertook to overhaul his affairs, and found old and forgotten bills amounting to £7,914. The discovery came as a shock; for Pitt, with his usual hopefulness, had told his Mentor that, as three-quarters of his official salary were due, he would have enough for his current liabilities. A further scrutiny showed that tradesmen, in default of any present return, took care to ensure an abundant harvest in the future. The butcher usually sent, or charged for, three or four hundredweight of meat on a Saturday, probably because Pitt was often away for the week-end. The meat bill for January

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[1] "Corresp. of Wilberforce," i, 9.

1785, when Pitt generally dined out, was £96, which, reckoning the price at sixpence a pound, implied a delivery of 34 hundredweight. Other bills for provisions (wrote Smith to Wilberforce) "exceed anything I could have imagined." Apparently they rose in proportion to Pitt's absence from home. His accounts were kept by a man named Wood, whose book-keeping seems to have been correct; but Smith begged Wilberforce to urge on Pitt the need of an immediate reform of his household affairs.[1] Whether it took place, we cannot tell; for this is one of the private subjects over which Bishop Tomline chose to draw the veil of propriety.

An economical householder would have found relief from the addition of £3,000 a year to his income. That was the net sum which accrued to him after August 1792, from the Lord Wardenship of the Cinque Ports.[2] That Pitt felt more easy in his mind is clear from his letter to Lady Chatham, dated Downing Street, 11th November 1793. She had been in temporary embarrassment. He therefore sent £300, and gently chid her for concealing her need so long. He continued as follows: "My accession of income has hitherto found so much employment in the discharge of former arrears as to leave no very large fund which I can with propriety dispose of. This, however, will mend every day, and at all events I trust you will never scruple to tell me when you have the slightest occasion for any aid that I can supply."[3]

Unfortunately, Pitt soon fell into difficulties, and partly from his own generosity as Colonel of the Walmer Volunteers. As we shall also see, he gave £2,000 to the Patriotic Fund started in January 1798. But carelessness continued to be his chief curse. In truth his lordly nature and his early training in the household of Chatham unfitted him for the practice of that bourgeois virtue, frugality. That he sought to practise it for the Commonwealth is a signal proof of his patriotism. We shall see that his embarrassments probably hindered him from a marriage, which might have crowned with joy his somewhat solitary life.

In the career of Pitt we find few incidents of the lighter kind, which diversify the lives of most statesmen of that age. Two such, however, connect him with the jovial society of Dundas. It was their custom to outline over their cups the course of the forthcoming debates; and on one occasion, when a motion was to be brought forward by Mr. (afterwards Earl) Grey, Dundas amused the company by making a burlesque oration on the Whig side. Pitt was so charmed by the performance that he declared that Dundas must make the official reply. The joke sounded well over wine; but great was the Scotsman's astonishment to find himself saddled with the task in the House. Members were equally taken aback; and the lobbies soon rustled with eager conjectures as to the reason why Pitt had surrendered his dearly cherished prerogative. It then transpired that the Prime Minister had acted partly on a whim, and partly on the conviction that a speaker who had so cleverly pleaded a case must be able to answer it with equal effect.[1]

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[1] "Corresp. of Wilberforce," i, 21-4.

[2] The gross income was £4,100: see Mr. E. W. Hamilton's estimate of Pitt's income (the total being £10,532) in App. C of Lord Rosebery's "Pitt."

[3] Pretyman MSS.

The other incident is likewise Bacchic, and is also uncertain as to date. Pitt, Dundas, and Thurlow had been dining with Jenkinson at Croydon; and during their rollicking career back towards Wimbledon, they found a toll-bar gate between Streatham and Tooting carelessly left open. Wine, darkness, and the frolicsome spirit of youth prompted them to ride through and cheat the keeper. He ran out, called to them in vain, and, taking them for highwaymen, fired his blunderbuss at their retreating forms.[2] The discharge was of course as harmless as that of firearms usually was except at point-blank range; but the writers of the "Rolliad" got wind of the affair, and satirised Pitt's lawlessness in the following lines:

Ah, think what danger on debauch attends!
Let Pitt o'er wine preach temperance to his friends,
How, as he wandered darkling o'er the plain,
His reason drowned in Jenkinson's champagne,
A rustic's hand, but righteous fate withstood,
Had shed a premier's for a robber's blood.

Gaiety and grief often tread close on one another's heels; and Pitt had his full share of the latter. The sudden death of his sister Harriet, on 25th September 1786, was a severe blow. She had married his Cambridge friend, Eliot, and expired shortly after childbirth. She was his favourite sister, having entered closely and fondly into his early life. He was prostrated with grief, and for some time could not attend even to the public business which was his second nature. Eliot, now destined to be more than ever a friend and brother, came to his house and for some time lived with him. It will be of interest to print here a new letter of George III to a Mr. Frazer who had informed him of the sad event.

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[1] G. Croly, "Mems. of George IV," i, 105, 106.

[2] *Ibid.*, 107.

WINDSOR,
Sept. 25, 1786. 9.15 p.m.[1]

I AM excessively hurt, as indeed all my family are, at the death of the amiable Lady Harriot Elliot (*sic*); but I do not the less approve Mr. Frazer's attention in acquainting me of this very melancholy event. I owne I dread the effect it may have on Mr. Pitt's health: I think it best not at this early period to trouble him with my very sincere condolence; but I know I can trust to the prudence of Mr. Frazer, and therefore desire he will take the most proper method of letting Mr. Pitt know what I feel for him, and that I think it kindest at present to be silent.

G. R.

The King further evinced his tactful sympathy by suggesting that Pitt should for a time visit his mother at Burton Pynsent. In other respects his private life was uneventfully happy. The conclusion of the commercial treaty with France, the buoyancy of the national revenue, and the satisfactory issue of the Dutch troubles must have eased his anxieties in the years 1786-87; and after the serious crisis last named, his position was truly enviable, until the acute situation arising from the mental malady of George III overclouded his prospects at the close of the year 1788.

Certainly Pitt was little troubled by his constituents. Almost the only proof of his parliamentary connection with the University of Cambridge (apart from warnings from friends at election times how so and so is to "be got at") is in a letter which I have discovered in the Hardwicke Papers. It refers to a Cambridge Debt Bill about to be introduced by Charles Yorke in April 1787, to which the University had requested Pitt to move certain amendments in its interest. It will be seen that Pitt proposed to treat the request rather lightly:

DEAR YORKE,

I am rather inclined to wish the Cambridge [Debt] Bill should pass without any alteration, unless you think there are material reasons for it.—The impanelling the jury does not seem to be a point of much consequence, but seems most naturally to be the province of the mayor. —With regard to the appeal, I think we agreed to strike it out entirely. —As the Commission are a mixed body from the town, the county, and the University, there seems to be an impropriety in appealing either to the town sessions or the County Sessions, either of which may be considered as only one out of three parties interested. The decision of the Commission appears therefore the most satisfactory, and if I recollect right, it is final as the bill now stands.

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[1] Chevening MSS.

Yours most sincerely,
W. PITT.[1]

In the whole of Pitt's correspondence I have found only one episode which lights up the recesses of his mind. As a rule, his letters are disappointingly business-like and formal. He wrote as a Prime Minister to supporters, rarely as a friend to a friend. And those who search the hundreds of packets of the Pitt Papers in order to find the real man will be tempted to liken him to that elusive creature which, when pursued, shoots away among the rocks under a protective cloud of ink. At one point, however, we catch a glimpse of his inmost beliefs. Wilberforce, having come under deep religious convictions in the autumn of 1785, resolved to retire for a time from all kinds of activity in order to take his bearings anew. Then he wrote to Pitt a full description of his changed views of life, stating also his conviction that he must give up some forms of work and amusement, and that he could never be so much of a party man as he had hitherto been. Pitt's reply, of 2nd December 1785, has recently seen the light. After stating that any essential opposition between them would cause him grief but must leave his affection quite untouched, he continued as follows:

> Forgive me if I cannot help expressing my fear that you are nevertheless deluding yourself into principles which have but too much tendency to counteract your own object and to render your virtues and

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 35684. In May 1790, Pitt drafted a letter to the members of the Senate of the University of Cambridge, asking for the support to his intended candidature for the office of High Steward, then vacant owing to the death of Lord Hardwicke. He expressed the hope that the crisis in public affairs would be deemed a sufficient excuse for not making the application in person. He was elected. The draft of the letter is in the Library of Pembroke College, Cambridge.

your talents useless both to yourself and to mankind. I am not, however, without hopes that my anxiety paints this too strongly. For you confess that the character of religion is not a gloomy one, and that it is not that of an enthusiast. But why then this preparation of solitude, which can hardly avoid tincturing the mind either with melancholy or superstition? If a Christian may act in the several relations of life, must he seclude himself from them all to become so? Surely the principles as well as the practice of Christianity are simple, and lead not to meditation only but to action. I will not, however, enlarge upon these subjects now. What I ask of you, as a mark both of your friendship and of the candour which belongs to your mind, is to open yourself fully and without reserve to one, who, believe me, does not know how to separate his happiness from your own.[1]

On the morrow, a Saturday, he called on Wilberforce at Wimbledon, and the friends for two hours unburdened their hearts to one another. We know little of that moving converse. The two men had ideals so different that unison was out of the question. The statesman, so we learn, had never reflected much on religion, that is, in the keenly introspective sense in which Wilberforce now used the word. To Pitt, as to most Englishmen, religion meant the acceptance of certain doctrines laid down by the State Church, and we may describe it as largely political and conventional, buttressing the existing order, but by no means transforming life or character. One glance alone we gain into the sanctuary of his thoughts; he told Wilberforce that Bishop Butler's "Analogy" raised in his mind more doubts than it answered—a proof (perhaps the only proof that survives) of his cherishing under that correct exterior a critical and questioning spirit.

To Wilberforce, thenceforth, all doubts were visitations of the devil. Indeed, the microscopic watch which he kept on his thoughts and moods seemed likely to stunt his activities. From this he was perhaps saved by his friendship with Pitt. True, they could no longer tread the same path. Pitt obeyed that call to action on behalf of his country which from his boyhood had deadened all other sounds. Wilberforce for a long time held aloof from politics as debateable ground beset with snares to the soul. And yet, though the two men diverged, the promptings of affection kept them ever within hail. No gulf ever opened out such as Coleridge finely pictured as yawning between two parted friends:

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[1] "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 13, 14.

> They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
> Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
> A dreary sea now flows between.

Indeed, Wilberforce found with some surprise that on most questions they agreed as before[1]—a proof that there was no desertion of principle on Pitt's part after the session of 1785. We may go further, and assert that in their changed relations the two friends exerted upon each other a mutually beneficent influence. The new convictions of Wilberforce tended to refine the activities of his friend; and Pitt's practical good sense helped to launch the philanthropist on that career of usefulness in which he could both glorify God and uplift myriads of negroes.

A sharp difference of opinion respecting the war with France overclouded their lives in the year 1793. Wilberforce fully recognized the sincerity of the Cabinet's efforts to avoid a rupture, and admitted that Ministers had not pursued a "war system." But shortly before the outbreak of hostilities, when he was about to speak in favour of conciliation, Pitt took the strange step of sending Bankes to him, earnestly begging him not to speak, as it might do irreparable mischief, and promising him an opportunity for the statement of his views. That opportunity did not come; and Wilberforce evidently resented this attempt to make political capital out of their friendship.[2] The breach between them did not widen until late in the year 1794, when Wilberforce deemed it his duty to move an amendment in favour of peace. Bankes and Duncombe supported it; but it was easily defeated. In the following year the relations between Pitt and Wilberforce on this question became so strained as to cause both of them deep distress. Indeed Pitt, who generally enjoyed profound slumbers, for a time suffered from insomnia. The only other occasions when sleep fled from him were the sudden resignation of Earl Temple late in 1783, the mutiny at the Nore, and the arrival of the news of Trafalgar.

The old feelings began to reassert themselves, when Pitt spoke strongly in favour of the Abolition of the Slave Trade (26th February 1795); but the friends did not meet for nearly a month, and then with some little embarrassment on both sides. All shadows, however, vanished in a few months' time, when Wilberforce came to see that his friend longed for peace so soon as it was compatible with security. Thereafter their old friendship revived, though tinged with the sadness attending disappointed hopes.

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 113.

[2] *Ibid.*, ii, 10-13.

Pitt did not so readily forget the independence now and again displayed by Bankes, for instance, in opposing Parliamentary Reform, the Westminster Scrutiny, and the continuance of the war. Though they were friendly at Cambridge, and afterwards at Goostree's Club and in the House, Pitt never warmed to Bankes, whose nature indeed was too precise, cold, and prudent ever to call forth affection. Respected by all for his sound but stolid speeches, he for forty years sat at Westminster as member for Corfe Castle. No one seems ever to have thought of making Bankes either a Minister or a peer. At a later time the circle of Pitt's friends included Canning and Wellesley, who will receive notice in later chapters.

On the whole, Pitt seems to have been somewhat exacting in his friendships. One of his early comrades complained that all suggestions to the Prime Minister must, under pain of his resentment, go forth to the world as emanations of his wisdom. This is to sacrifice friendliness and candour to egotism and parliamentary punctilio. True, no statesman can afford to neglect prudential considerations; and we may freely grant that the cautious calculations of Pitt rarely obsessed his whole being, as that of Napoleon was dominated by his egotism. We do not find Pitt acting, still less speaking, in the sense which prompted the remark of Napoleon about an over scrupulous servant: "He is not devoted to me; he does not want to get on."

It must be confessed that there is something wanting about Pitt. He lacked geniality and glow alike in his treatment of men, and in his attitude towards the aspirations of the age then dawning. Probably this defect sprang from a physical basis. It must be remembered that Chatham was nearly all his life a martyr to gout. He bequeathed this weakness to his second son, a fact which may account for the coldness of Pitt's nature. Just as creatures with a torpid circulation love to bask in the sun, so his chilliness may have prompted the cravings for the Bacchic society of Dundas and Steele. In this respect he suffers by comparison with Fox, the full-blooded man, the impetuous foe, the open-handed, forgiving friend, whose character somewhat resembles that of Antony, deified by Cleopatra:

> For his bounty,
> There was no winter in 't; an autumn 'twas
> That grew the more by reaping; his delights
> Were dolphin-like; they showed his back above
> The element they lived in.[1]

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[1] "Antony and Cleopatra," v, sc. 2.

CHAPTER XIII

ISOLATION

(1784, 1785)

The situation of Europe appears never to have been so critical at any epoch since the breaking out of the Thirty Years' War as it is at the present moment.—SIR JAMES HARRIS, *2nd February* 1785.

THE American War of Independence left Great Britain in a critical situation both internally and in relation to other Powers. She had been at war with France, Spain, the Dutch Netherlands, and the United States, while the Baltic Powers threatened her with hostilities owing to her insistence on an exacting maritime code. As she refused to come to a compromise on these questions, the period of peace which followed after the Treaty of Versailles (September 1783) did not lead to a resumption of friendly relations with the States above named. She was in part hated, in part despised.

The prevalent feeling found striking expression in an intercepted letter of Frederick the Great, which our able ambassador, Sir James Harris, saw at St. Petersburg. The crabbed monarch therein described Great Britain as a land ruined by an unfortunate war, and unable ever again to become a formidable rival to France. Here the wish was father to the thought. "Old sour-mug," as the Berliners dubbed him, had not forgiven his desertion by England at the close of the Seven Years' War, and never missed an opportunity of affronting George III and damaging his interests. It was he who, in the years 1778 and 1779, thwarted Harris's plan of effecting an Anglo-Russian alliance, which might have nullified the efforts of France in the American War; and now, at the end of that struggle, the resentful old King did his best to perpetuate the isolation of the Island Power. In name, he was our ally, the treaty of 1756 never having been broken; but in reality he was the wiliest of opponents, his fleeting fits of complaisance being designed to make bad blood between England and the Emperor Joseph II.[1]

The ceaseless rivalry of Austria and Prussia would generally have enabled Great Britain to count on the support of one of those Powers. But while Frederick flouted us from senile spleen, Joseph held aloof from motives of policy. Not only did he hold England cheap, but he saw in her an obstacle to one of his many schemes. As he was then one of the most active of European rulers, we may well begin our survey of foreign affairs by a short account of him and of his aims.

Joseph II (1780-1790) held the extensive lands of the House of Hapsburg-Lorraine, ranging from the Milanese to Cracow, and from the Carpathians to the Breisgau on the Upper Rhine; but these States, especially those in Italy and Swabia, lacked the strength that comes from continuity. His position as "Emperor" (that is, elective head of the Holy Roman Empire) implied little; for the confederate princes of that moribund organism had almost complete sovereign powers in the component States. To breathe new life into "the Empire" was almost hopeless; but he set himself to solidify and extend his hereditary dominions by a series of attractively perilous projects. He also sought to centralize at Vienna the governing powers of his very diverse domains, and to carry out reforms, social, agrarian, and religious, which aroused widespread opposition. Many of his schemes were generous and enlightened, but they stirred the resentment of landowners, priests, and Nationalists, especially in Hungary and in his Belgic Provinces. In order to carry out these programmes, he sought or maintained alliances with the most powerful States, namely, Russia and France.

Here we are concerned chiefly with his connection with the latter Power. Despite temporary causes of friction, the Franco-Austrian alliance of 1756 still subsisted; and it had gained new vitality by the marriage of Louis XVI (then Dauphin) with Marie Antoinette, a daughter of Maria Theresa and sister of Joseph II, whose efforts on behalf of Viennese policy were to effect something for that Court, at the expense of her popularity at Paris. Thus, early in the year 1785, when Joseph II revived a scheme, which had been thwarted in 1778, for the exchange of his discontented Belgic lands for the Electorate of Bavaria, all Europe saw in it the hand of Marie Antoinette. The absorption of Bavaria would have made the Hapsburgs absolutely supreme in Central Europe, while the transfer of the Bavarian Electoral House to Brussels would have broken down the Barrier arrangements which British statecraft had ever sought to build up on the North of France. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) had assigned the then Spanish Netherlands to the House of Austria in order to set limits to the expansion of France; and the transfer could not be made without the consent of the signatory Powers, the chief being England.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 24-26, 49, 55. The character and career of Sir James Harris (the future Earl of Malmesbury) will concern us later. Herr F. K. Wittichen, "Preussen und England in der Europäischen Politik—1785-1788," *ad init.*, condemns the resentment of Frederick the Great as a mistake, fatal to the interests both of Prussia and England.

In other respects, too, Joseph's Belgian policy ran counter to British interests. He had ordered the Dutch troops out of the fortresses (Mons, Namur, etc.), which, by the Barrier Treaty of 1715, they had the right to occupy at the expense of those districts; and he further set at naught well-established rights of the Dutch, first by furbishing up certain musty claims to their frontier stronghold, Maestricht; and secondly, by declaring the navigation of the estuary of the Scheldt, below Antwerp, free from Dutch control. In the latter demand he undoubtedly had "natural law" on his side, while the law of nations was as clearly for the Dutch, the Treaty of Münster (1648) having empowered them to close that estuary to all commerce but their own. As a result the once flourishing trade of Antwerp was wellnigh strangled, and it was reasonable for Joseph II to seek to end this state of things. Nevertheless, his conduct in setting aside that treaty-right without consulting other Powers, was no less indefensible than the same action of the French Revolutionists in the autumn of 1792, which largely brought about the Great War. In fact, the conduct of Joseph II towards his own subjects and neighbouring States fitly earned him the designation, the "crowned revolutionist"; and, had his power of carrying out schemes equalled his facility in weaving them, he might have figured in history as a Teutonic Napoleon.

Equally disturbing and more incisive was the influence of Catharine II of Russia. It is needless to describe here the strange career of that daughter of a poor German prince who ultimately became Czarina. She was justly suspected of having connived at the murder of her consort Peter III; and her relations with her son, the future Paul I, were severely strained by her numerous amours. But no indulgences dulled the vision or the ambition of Catharine. Her freshness of mind and facility of expression dazzled her philosophic visitors, Diderot and Grimm; and these varied powers were held in leash by a virile will which made her one of the greatest political forces of the age. Her resolve to aggrandize Russia centred in two great enterprises, the partition of Poland and the overthrow of the Turkish Power. In the first partition of Poland (1772) she had the concurrence of Frederick the Great and the reluctant consent of Maria Theresa; but the death of the latter, in November 1780, removed all checks on Joseph II, who for fifteen years had been associated with her in the government of the Austrian States.

The two most daring rulers in Europe in the year 1781 came to an understanding which foreboded a general upheaval. Their arrangement did not take the form of a treaty, for Joseph, as Emperor, claimed precedence in all titles, which Catharine, proud of the comparatively new Imperial title of the Czars of Muscovy, refused to recognize. Accordingly, in May 1781, the punctilious sovereigns exchanged letters, binding themselves to mutual support; Joseph undertaking to assist the Czarina in her designs against the Turks, while she guaranteed to Joseph the integrity of his dominions, thus enabling him to adopt the forward policy whose developments in the Netherlands we have noticed.

In vain did Frederick the Great and England seek, though by widely diverse means, to dissolve this alliance. Capricious and violent in private life and in her likes and dislikes, Catharine showed statesmanlike firmness and caution in public affairs. Her firmness appeared in her refusal to take the tempting bait of Minorca which our ambassador Harris skilfully held out to her in 1780, if she would mediate in favour of England in the American War. She rightly saw more profit in heading the Armed Neutrality League; and Harris used all his arts in vain.[1] Her caution shines in her charming repartee to Diderot after the French philosopher had vivaciously sketched his plan of renovating Russia. "M. Diderot, you forget in all your plans of reform the difference in our positions; you only work on paper, which endures all things; it opposes no obstacle either to your imagination or to your pen. But I, poor Empress that I am, work on a sensitive and irritable medium, the human skin." In these phrases lies the secret of the success of Catharine and of the ultimate failure of Joseph. He forgot that the sentient skin is not parchment: she never forgot it.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," i, 374, 402, 532. He thought her hasty, and swayed by passion or caprice; but events proved that she did not lack foresight or firmness

For the present, their alliance promised to make them the arbiters of Europe, Catharine in the East, and her ally in the centre and the Netherlands. It was therefore desirable for Great Britain to gain their alliance, or at least their friendship. But our overtures were repulsed at both Courts. In vain did Sir Murray Keith, our respected envoy at Vienna, seek to undermine the unnatural alliance between France and Austria, and suggest a return to the traditional connection between the Courts of St. James and Vienna; the Francophile policy of the Austrian Chancellor, Kaunitz, was still in the ascendant.

In vain also did Alleyne Fitzherbert, now the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, remind Catharine II of the many interests, trading and political, we had in common, and of the help we had given to the infant navy of Russia in officers and men, and in granting facilities for its repair at Portsmouth and Port Mahon.[1] With her, past services weighed but lightly as against present expediency. The assurances of the previous decade as to the natural links between England and Russia were ridiculed, probably because her keen eyes discerned, sooner than those of any British statesman, the eventual opposition of England to her scheme of seizing Constantinople. As a prelude to this enterprise she annexed the Crimea in the year 1783; and, as we shall see later, she thenceforth bent all her energies to the task of enthroning at Constantinople her grandson, Constantine. The alliance of Austria being essential, and the union of the Hapsburgs with France being but little impaired by Joseph's Belgic plans (at least up to the end of 1784), she courted Paris and slighted London. A proposal which Fitzherbert made at St. Petersburg in April 1784, for an alliance with Russia, Sweden, and Denmark, fell to the ground.[2]

Thus, the trend of European politics in the East, in Germany, and in the Netherlands told heavily against England and increased the natural reluctance of any Power to seek the friendship of a beaten nation. It is at such times that the artificiality of the idea of the Balance of Power is seen. No State took the slightest interest in restoring the islanders to their rightful position in the world. For this they had to trust to themselves and to their young leader.

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[1] Mahan, "Influence of Sea Power," i, 11.

[2] Martens, iii, 327.

In point of fact, Pitt and his Foreign Secretary, the Marquis of Carmarthen, at first desired little more than to be left alone. Peace is always the greatest of British interests, and it was so pre-eminently at that time, when the interest on the National Debt absorbed three-fourths of the nation's revenue. Foreign Affairs interested the Cabinet but little, so we gather from the memoranda of the Marquis of Carmarthen (afterwards Duke of Leeds); but he there states that Pitt applied himself closely to the correspondence with ambassadors, and that, in a conversation which they had together at Wimbledon in May 1784, he found that they agreed as to the desirability of severing the connection of Austria with France, and of forming some alliance which would counterbalance the power of the French and Spanish Houses of Bourbon; but at the same time Pitt was strongly convinced of the need of avoiding any engagements which might lead to war.[1] That George III had lost his bellicose temper appears from the closing sentence of his letter of 6th July 1784 to Carmarthen: "Till I see this country in a situation more respectable as to Army, Navy, and Finances, I cannot think anything that may draw us into troubled waters either safe or rational."[2]

This sensible pronouncement was called forth by the proposal of Pitt and Carmarthen to make another overture to the Empress Catharine. An opportunity occurred owing to a recent compact between France and Sweden, according to the former a naval depôt and other special privileges at the port of Gothenburg. As this might enable French warships to control the mouth of the Baltic, it threatened the interests of England, Denmark, and Russia; and the British Cabinet, always intent on regaining the favour of the Czarina, began to sound the situation at St. Petersburg and Copenhagen. Carmarthen sought the advice of Sir James Harris, and received the following witty reply:

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[1] "Leeds Memoranda" (edited by Mr. Oscar Browning), 101.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 27914. This letter and other documents of interest will appear in my volume "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies."

Cuffnalls, Oct. 6, 1784.[1]

Should the Northern Lights be really enlightened, and a spark of common sense be added to Kitty's bright understanding I hope my friend Fitz[herbert] will accomplish the point we have all failed in. I cannot but suppose that the Ch[ancellor] and Lord C. will defer to your opinion, and that your next messenger will carry positive and particular instructions both to Hamlet and Semiramis.

"Semiramis" (Catharine) proved to be no less obdurate to Fitzherbert than to Harris, though the instructions issued to the former had been drawn up in a masterly manner by Pitt himself. It is clear that the young statesman took a keen interest in the overture to Russia; for when Carmarthen sent him a draft of his "Instructions for Mr. Fitzherbert," he sent the hitherto unpublished replies, which throw an interesting light on his relations to that Minister, and his views on foreign policy:

BRIGHTHELMSTONE, Wed^y night. *Oct.* 13, 1784.[2]

MY DEAR LORD,

I return you with many thanks the draft of the Instructions to Mr. Fitzherbert. I trouble you at the same time, as you permitted me, with the sketch of the Ideas which had occurred to me on the same subject. I have the satisfaction to perceive, as I flattered myself must be the case, that our Ideas do not seem to differ in any respect. I hardly need give you the trouble of reading my scrawl. I leave it however to your consideration, tho' hardly thinking anything in it will repay the time of perusing it. You will, I am sure, excuse a proof at least of my solicitude on a subject on which we feel equally interested.

That Carmarthen set a high value on the "scrawl," appears from the fact that it bears the pencil-mark, "sent to Russia the 15th." As it was probably the first diplomatic note ever penned by Pitt, it deserves to be quoted in full, especially as it proves that he was no advocate of isolation. He saw too well the dangers of it. Further, those who take pleasure in contrasting his orderly and forcible statement of ideas with a loose and feeble statement may consult the draft of Carmarthen, which that Minister had the good sense to replace by Pitt's:[1]

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 28060. "Lord C." may be Lord Clarendon, who had previously given advice to Lord Carmarthen.

[2] *Ibid.*

> It is His Majesty's earnest desire to regulate his conduct on the occasion of the late Treaty between France and Sweden, in the strictest concert with the Court of Petersburg. And therefore, altho' it would have been a great satisfaction to have known first what line appeared to the Empress most proper to be pursued, we have no difficulty in stating without reserve what the situation appears to us to call for. We wish at the same time to know whether any other specifick measures have been thought of by the Empress, and we are ready in every respect to enter into the fullest and most confidential communication.
>
> We are not aware of any treaty or of any other ground, which gives a direct and absolute right to object to any arrangement which the King of Sweden may have thought proper to make in this instance with regard to a Port of his own dominions; altho' the possibility of its being carried to the extent which there is reason to suspect is ultimately intended cannot but occasion great jealousy, and altho' even in a commercial light, it may possibly not be a matter of indifference. The difficulty of making a direct opposition in the first instance seems, by Mr. Fitzherbert's report, to have struck the Ministers of the Empress in the same manner. On this supposition, the only immediate step which it appears natural to take is to desire from the Court of Stockholm an explanation to what extent the privileges granted to the French are *bonâ fide* intended to be carried. A representation to this purpose should, we think, be made jointly in the names of the Courts of London, Petersburg, and Copenhagen, if the latter Court should be disposed (as we trust will be the case) to co-operate on this occasion. This may produce such an explanation from Sweden as may furnish a strong additional ground for interference hereafter to prevent the dangerous designs of France, if she should be inclined to avail herself of the privileges she has now acquired to carry them into execution. If the answer should not be explicit and satisfactory, further measures should be concerted to guard against the effects to be apprehended. Indeed, whatever colour may be given to the transaction, it would not seem wise to trust implicitly to assurances and explanations. In every light, therefore, the only substantial security would be in an establishment of that permanent and solid connection between this country and Russia

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 28060. It is endorsed, in Pitt's hand: "Oct. 12, 1784, Mem^{m} for Instructions to Mr. Fitzherbert." Carmarthen's draft is almost certainly that which is printed by Mr. Oscar Browning in the "Leeds Memoranda," p. 103 *n.*; but the evidence here given shows that that draft cannot be Pitt's, as Mr. Browning at that time (1884) naturally inferred.

> and Denmark, which their common interests render on all accounts most desireable. Without such a system, [the] consequences of this attempt cannot be effectually obviated, direct opposition to it seeming hardly practicable; and desultory and unconnected efforts which terminate in one single and separate point (even if the occasion admitted of their being exerted to the utmost) promising comparatively but little effect. Explanations and assurances, however explicit, unless such measures are taken to enforce an adherence to them, will be but a feeble and precarious barrier against the encroaching spirit which has dictated this project. Even if this particular measure should be defeated, the same spirit (unless effectual and systematic steps are taken to counteract it) will show itself in other shapes and on innumerable occasions. This object therefore of an alliance between the three Courts seems to be the only measure, under the present circumstances, which promises effectual support to their common interests and to the general tranquillity of Europe. And there seems no reason to imagine that there can be any obstacle in the way of its completion, which a cordial and mutual inclination, and a free and open discussion will not easily remove.

All was in vain. There was more method in Catharine II's waywardness than Harris understood. Her aim being the preparation of a great fleet at Sevastopol with a view to the conquest of Turkey, she needed, as we have seen, the co-operation of Austria; but that implied friendship with France, and therefore coolness to England.[1] These motives long continued to govern the policy of the Empress, and prevented the formation of any good understanding with her.

As for the Emperor, Joseph II, there was small hope of an alliance with him. The emergence, early in 1785, of his pet scheme of a Belgic-Bavarian exchange was a palpable threat to the old Germanic System, of which George III, as Elector of Hanover, was a pillar; and he knew right well that the Court of St. James would steadfastly oppose the weakening of the Barrier in Flanders which must ensue from so violent a change. Sir James Harris summed up the opinion of our statesmen when he said that that Barrier against the encroachments of France had "ever been deemed essential to the interests of Europe in general and to those of England in particular; but it is destroyed the moment the Low Countries either belong to France directly, or are governed by a sovereign devoted to her influence."[1]

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[1] This is well set forth in the despatches of Lord Dalrymple, British Ambassador at Berlin, to Carmarthen. The latter wrote to Harris on 24th February 1786, that Vorontzoff would try to persuade Catharine II to restore the "good system," and to induce Joseph II to help in the work; but nothing came of it (B.M. Add. MSS., 28061).

We here touch upon a question which, after being the fruitful cause of wars from the time of the Plantagenets, was soon to involve Great Britain in the struggle with Revolutionary France, and yet again with Napoleon. The effort to prevent France acquiring complete control over the Netherlands was to be the chief work of William Pitt—a career far other than that which he had marked out for himself, and into which, as we shall see, he was drawn most reluctantly. The struggle presents three well-marked phases: the first concerns chiefly the disputes between the Stadholder of the United Provinces and the Patriots, abetted by France, which finally resulted in a complete triumph for the former, thanks to the action of Prussia and England and the formation of the Triple Alliance of 1788. In the second period Revolutionary France, with the help of the Patriots, overran those provinces, and set up the Batavian or Dutch Republic. The uneasy Peace of Amiens ended in 1803, largely because Bonaparte insisted on treating that Republic as a dependency of France; and Pitt's life closed in the midst of the world-strife that ensued. But the Treaties of Vienna carried out (what Napoleon never would have agreed to[2]) the erection of a seemingly solid Barrier against France, the Kingdom of the United Netherlands.

These mighty convulsions arose very largely from a contention as to the fate of the Netherlands. The importance of States depends not so much on their size as on their situation; and the Dutch and Belgic Netherlands, forming the fringes of the French and Teutonic peoples, derive great importance from that circumstance, or perhaps even more from their occupying the coast-line beside the mouths of the Rhine, Meuse, and Scheldt, which contains fine harbours and is peopled by an enterprising and industrious folk. The conduct of a British Government with respect to those lands is, so to speak, a barometric test of its skill and energy. None but the weakest and most craven of Administrations has ever allowed a great hostile Power to dominate the mouths of those rivers. It was no idle boast of Napoleon that at his great naval port of Antwerp he held a pistol at the head of England. Doubly true would that vaunt be of a Great Power which held Rotterdam and Amsterdam. In a description of the struggle with France in 1785-7 for supremacy in the Dutch Netherlands, we are concerned with the prelude of what was to be a mighty trilogy of war.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 104. Memorandum of 2nd February 1785.

[2] Even after the disasters of 1813 Napoleon wrote: "Holland is a French country and will remain so for ever" ("Lettres inédites," 6th November 1813).

The fatuity of Lord North's Administration was nowhere more glaringly shown than in the high-handed proceedings at sea which embroiled us with the United Provinces, but it should be remembered that three provinces out of the seven strongly objected to go to war. Accordingly, that ill-knit confederacy conducted the war without vigour; and, after Dutch commerce had suffered severely, it concluded peace with Great Britain in 1783, ceding the station of Negapatam in India. Resentment against England was blended with indignation against the Anglophile Stadholder, William V, who was accused of having paralysed the efforts of his country. He was even reported by the Patriots or democrats to have expressed the hope, after the Dutch success at the Dogger Bank, that the English fleet had not suffered much. These and other silly tales acquired some credibility from the fact that he was the son of the Princess Anne, daughter of George II, who had imbued him with a love of her country. As his guardian and instructor in statecraft was Duke Lewis of Brunswick, whose intermeddling finally hastened his departure from the country, the popular movement for the lessening of the Stadholder's powers acquired strength from the hatred of foreigners and foreign ways always so strong in that home-loving folk. These, then, were the circumstances which brought the disputes between the Patriots and the Orange party to a crisis in the years 1785-7, and threatened to plunge Europe into a great war. The immediate causes were petty and local. The possible results were of world-wide importance.

The functions of the hereditary Stadholder had undergone several changes according to the exigencies of the times. In the long struggle with Spain, as later with Louis XIV, the Dutch had wisely entrusted to the Princes of Orange the chief executive powers, only to go back to strictly republican and federal customs when the crisis was past. The same expedient held good during the invasion of the Maréchal de Saxe in 1746-7, and with a similar sequel. Thus, to the House of Orange the Dutch looked for a Cincinnatus in times of stress, but expected him afterwards to go back to his tulips. The advantage of such an arrangement is obvious, provided that the populace is fully agreed as to the time of summoning Cincinnatus and the time of dismissal; also that that illustrious House could ever furnish a supply of men doughty in war and submissive in peace.

But here lay the difficulty: that the Princes and their supporters objected to arrangements which implied phenomenal powers of activity and hibernation. A demand arose that the Republic should so far centralize its governing powers as to be ready against emergencies; and in 1747 the United Provinces adopted a constitution whereby the Stadholderate became a perpetual office, hereditary in the House of Orange. It was confirmed by all the provinces in 1766; and until recently no one had disputed the right of the Prince to command the armed forces, both military and naval, and to exercise a large amount of control over the executive functions of the provinces. He shared these last with the States General, representing all the provinces, and with the States of the several provinces. Nevertheless, these bodies, together with their Grand Pensionaries, Greffiers, and the Regents (or chief magistrates) of towns, looked jealously on his prerogatives and sharply resented any change tending to unify and centralize the forces of the nation.[1]

In truth, the task of holding together the United Provinces was like that of grasping oiled billiard balls. They were, in effect, independent States, having power to decide on peace and war, make treaties and raise loans. Differing in their constitutions, they also stood in different relations to the Stadholderate. The duties of the States General were to uphold the Union framed at Utrecht in 1579, and, as far as possible, to supervise foreign policy and national defence, the executive side of these functions falling to the Stadholder and a Council of State. But ratification by the States of the several provinces, or at least by a majority of them, was needful to give validity to all such decisions and actions. When we further learn that the Regencies of the chief towns had the right of ratifying the decisions of the States of their provinces, we can understand the magnitude of the task which confronted the Stadholders and Marlborough in defending those clannish communities.

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[1] See Colenbrander, "De Patriottentijd," i, 415, for the Prince's difficulty in forming (February 1784) a permanent force of 8,000 sailors subject to the Council of War and not to the provincial Estates; also "A View of the Policy . . . of the United Provinces" (Dublin, 1787). As Grenville wrote to Pitt from The Hague on 31st July 1787, that the Dutch understood their Constitution very imperfectly ("Dropmore P.," iii, 410), I may be pardoned for not seeking to unravel it here.

The alleged treachery of the Stadholder during the late war with England, together with resentment at his centralizing efforts, had now roused these local instincts to a state of fury, which William V seemed unable either to quell or to calm. In truth, that hapless ruler was irresolution personified. His *rôle* was always one of passivity. Rarely did he show a spark of spirit or turn the tables on his opponents, though he might easily have thrown on them the responsibility for the misfortunes of the war, of which they, not he, were the cause.[1] Compared with him, that other political nullity, Louis XVI, seemed a man of firmness and energy. Strange to say, the lottery of marriage had given to each of them an active and capable consort. In her smaller sphere, Wilhelmina, Princess of Orange, played a part not unlike that of Marie Antoinette. She was niece of Frederick the Great and shared in the strong qualities that are rarely eclipsed in the House of Hohenzollern; but for the present she was doomed idly to chafe at the humiliating restrictions of her lot. The lynx eyes of Sir James Harris soon detected her real feelings for her husband, which, though curbed by wifely duty, now and again broke forth. In the as yet unpublished letters of Harris to the Marquis of Carmarthen are sharp comments on the dullness and torpor of the Prince. These piquant words describe the relations of that ill-matched pair: "He is so jealous of her sense and power that he would not even go to Paradise by her influence; and she has so mean an opinion of his capacity, and, in general, that kind of contempt a high-spirited woman feels for an inferior male being, that I see no hopes of bringing them to that degree of cohesion so highly necessary for the completion of my future plans."[2]

The man who wrote these words had already seen much of men and affairs. Born at Salisbury in 1746, Harris was educated at Oxford, where his acquaintance with Fox instilled into him Whig principles. After completing his studies at Leyden, he entered the diplomatic service, served with distinction at Madrid and Berlin, and acted as ambassador at Petersburg in the years 1777-82, spending there, so it is said, £20,000 of his private fortune, in his country's service. Returning to England, he entered Parliament as member for Christchurch, and warmly supported Fox. His handsome presence and lively conversation won him high favour at Carlton House, and afterwards, probably at the suggestion of Pitt, he gave good advice to the Prince of Wales. A leader in society, as in the diplomatic world, the brilliant Harris was courted on all sides; but popularity did not dull his love for his wife; and the strong expressions of friendship which occur in the correspondence between him and Carmarthen show that these versatile and witty men (the latter wrote a comedy which earned the praise of Warton) had a deep fund of staunchness and fidelity. Their affection had some political results. The first article in the political creed of Sir James Harris was hatred of France; and the intervention of Pitt in the affairs of the Foreign Office may be ascribed to his perception of the Gallophobe bias which the vehement and persuasive Harris imparted to the policy of Carmarthen.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 92-4, 222-4.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 28060, Letter of 23rd August 1785. These "private" letters are often more interesting and important than those printed in the "Malmesbury Diaries," which form but a small portion of the whole.

Such was the envoy who at the close of the year 1784 proceeded to The Hague, to uphold the cause of the Stadholder and England against the Patriots and France. The outlook seemed of the gloomiest. "There is not, I fear" (so he wrote on 7th December), "the most distant prospect of reclaiming this country." And again, on 11th March 1785: "We have nothing to expect from this country. Passive, tame, and void of every public virtue, they [the Orange party] will submit to everything. The Prince now talks of going away, of selling his demesnes in these provinces and retiring to Germany—a resolution which, if ever he carries it into execution, will compleat his character."[1] As for the refusal of Frederick the Great to help his niece Wilhelmina, it cut the chivalrous Harris to the quick. His private letters to Carmarthen breathe hatred against France, but contempt of Prussia. When Frederick coolly advised her to disarm the Patriots by coming to terms with France, the impetuous Harris burst forth: "The knot must be cut, not untied, and the King of Prussia's half measures rejected."[1] Admiration for that unfortunate princess added vehemence to his language. He found her far more frank and genuine than Catharine of Russia, needing very little of the flattery which he vainly lavished on "Semiramis." He succeeded in persuading the Princess to trust England rather than Prussia; and it is clear that he worked for a compact between Great Britain, Austria, and the Netherlands, with the inclusion of Russia and Denmark if possible. But at times, in hearing of the indignities that she daily had to bear at The Hague, he forgot mere questions of policy. "Now and then" (he wrote on 9th September 1785) "my thoughts get worldly, and I think of flesh and blood when I see a pair of fine eyes with the tears starting from them, but I soon suppress this idea."[2] Perhaps it was well that the Prince and Princess left The Hague and went to reside at Nymeguen, in faithful Guelderland, near the Prussian Duchy of Cleves.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 28060.

As Pitt looked away from the turmoil at Westminster (it was the year of the Reform Bill and the Irish Propositions) he might well feel dismay at the almost indescribable welter on the Continent. On all sides the old order was breaking up. Two mighty Empires took the lead in disruptive schemes which menaced the smaller States with ruin. Intellectual keenness and military force helped on the coming cataclysm. Catharine and Joseph were by far the ablest rulers of their age. Frederick, a prey to moroseness, was content to wait for favours from Versailles which were never forthcoming. France as yet showed few signs of that weakness which was soon to overtake her. True, Louis XVI was a nonentity; but in Marie Antoinette the Austro-French alliance had its corner stone. Moreover, the French Foreign Minister, Vergennes, was a man of outstanding talents. His hostility to England had been notorious; and even now he was reviving the French East India Company, and was pressing the Sultan for trading facilities in Egypt and the Red Sea, which threatened our ascendancy in India.[3] To complete this brief survey, we may note that England had disputes with Spain concerning the rights of British merchants on the Mosquito Coast of Central America;[1] and the ill humour of the Court of Madrid lent some credit to persistent rumours of the formation of a Quadruple Alliance between Russia, Austria, France, and Spain, for the overthrow of England.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 28060.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] See the conversation of Joseph II with Sir R. M. Keith at Vienna in December 1785, on French designs on Egypt, as given in chap. xxi, *ad init.*

Having gained some knowledge of the chief players in the great game that was now opening, and of the vast issues at stake, we return to notice its varying fortunes, especially as they concerned Pitt. It should be remembered that, while the Marquis of Carmarthen wrote the despatches, the spirit which informed them was that of the Prime Minister. Carmarthen had ability, but it trickled off towards lampoons and plays. In *la haute politique* he never had very deep interest; but it is clear that Pitt soon found in it the fascination which has enthralled many a master mind.

As we have already seen, Joseph II early in 1785 led the way in two very threatening moves, namely, the proposal for the Belgic-Bavarian Exchange and the demand that the Dutch should cede to him Maestricht and throw open the navigation of the Scheldt estuary below Antwerp. It was characteristic of him that he should press both these disturbing claims in the same year, a fact which reveals his confidence in his alliances with Russia and France, and his contempt for the isolated Powers, Prussia, Holland, and Great Britain. In these two matters he used his allies as passive tools for the furtherance of his own ends; and this explains the concluding sentences of Harris's letter to Carmarthen quoted in part above: "The Emperor dupes Russia: France makes a fool of Prussia. In two words this seems to be the state of Europe. I wish England could take advantage of this singular position of affairs."[2]

Pitt and his colleagues were by no means so absorbed in managing the House of Commons as Harris hinted in his letter of four days later to Joseph Ewart at Berlin. The despatches of this able official, Secretary of the British Legation at the Prussian capital, had already warned them of their danger, and pointed to an alliance with Prussia as the only way of escape. The once Prussophobe Harris admitted to Ewart the force of these arguments;[3] and, as Hertzberg, one of the Prussian Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs, favoured an English connection, there was some hope that the long feud between Frederick the Great and George III would die a natural death. During a visit to London in May, Harris drew up convincing arguments in favour of a Prussian alliance, and the King suggested that he should go to Berlin to arrange matters.[1]

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[1] Salomon, "Pitt," 309, 310; also Martens, iv, 133-9, for the treaty closing this dispute.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 28060.

[3] "Malmesbury Mems.," ii, 113-21.

Unfortunately the martinet of Sans Souci was as unbending as ever. He would not hear of entering into a general alliance with England, either because he still hankered after a union with France,[2] or feared that an *entente* with the islanders would drive France into close union with Russia and Austria. His resolve was the more remarkable because the Duke of York had been at Berlin to arrange the accession of Hanover to the League of German Princes which Frederick was then forming as a counterstroke to Joseph's assault on the Germanic System.[3] That the Prussian monarch should have neglected to strengthen that inherently weak union by the support of England, is one of the puzzles of his reign. Had he done so, the League would have taken a long stride forward towards the unification of Germany. Frederick chose otherwise. He welcomed Hanover and repulsed Great Britain. The League therefore lacked the support that it might have had. England and Prussia went their own ways, and therefore yielded to France the first place in the affairs of Western Europe, particularly in Holland. Moreover the Imperial Courts hotly resented the inclusion of Hanover in the League, as will presently appear.

George III very rarely, if ever, consulted Pitt concerning Hanoverian affairs, the control of which he shared solely with the Regency at Hanover.[4] But the accession of the Electorate to the *Fürstenbund*, which took definite shape in August 1785, was not the purely Germanic affair which George III strove to represent it. The incident gave deep umbrage to Joseph and Catharine; and their anger fell scarcely less on Frederick than on the Elector of Hanover. Vorontzoff, the Russian ambassador at London, on 5th August handed in a sharp protest, which Pitt at once forwarded to Windsor. It hinted that if George III did not annul his treaty with Prussia and Saxony, Russia would form alliances disagreeable to England. As appears in the

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[1] "Leeds Mem.," 111-13.

[2] Wittichen, *op. cit.*, 8, 25 *et seq.*, and 173, 174; "Malmesbury Mems.," 131.

[3] *Ibid.*, 118.

[4] Tomline, ii, 108; "Leeds Mem.," 116.

King's reply to Pitt, George scorned the threat, which proved to be harmless.

The natural outcome of this should have been an Anglo-Prussian *entente.* As Frederick and George had given deep offence to the Imperial Courts, it would have been reasonable for them to bury the hatchet and come to a secret compact for mutual defence. Hanover, which had so long been the cause of alienation, should now have brought them to a close union. For this consummation Ewart had long been working. He it was who first caught a glimpse of the brilliant prospects which an Anglo-Prussian alliance would open up; and with his perfervid Scottish nature (he was born at a manse near Kirkcudbright in 1759, the year of Pitt's birth) he set himself to win the confidence of the Prussian Minister, Count Hertzberg, and the respect of his chiefs at London. Possessing lively manners, a frank and pleasing address, natural shrewdness, perseverance, and zeal tempered with tact, he gradually won the confidence of Hertzberg, and saw him at least once, and often twice, every day. Thus he paved the way for a second proposal of a general alliance between England and Prussia. "*M. Ewart me tourmente beaucoup du plan,*" wrote Hertzberg on 5th July to the Princess of Orange.[1] For the present he toiled in vain; but it is clear that the first conception of the Triple Alliance of England, Prussia, and Holland, originated neither with Pitt nor Carmarthen, nor Harris, nor Hertzberg, but with Ewart. His chief at Berlin, Lord Dalrymple, was in the main a figure-head of the British Embassy, and did not favour an Anglo-Prussian compact. But Ewart plodded on at the basis of the fabric, which Pitt and Harris were destined to complete. The services of this lonely and pertinacious Scot have not received due recognition.[2]

The threats of the Czarina, however much they might be spurned at Windsor and Whitehall, furnished another reason why Pitt and Carmarthen should seek to come to some understanding with Prussia; but, having failed in the month of May, they were now warily on their guard. The feeling prevalent in diplomatic circles is piquantly expressed in Harris's letter of 23rd August to Carmarthen: "As for the King of Prussia if he is sincere, he will die; if not, he will of course deceive us; in both cases he should be used only as a tool, and, by being forced to speak out himself, compel others [*i.e.* Austria and Russia] to declare themselves."[1]

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[1] Colenbrander, iii, 16, quoted by Wittichen, 173.

[2] Joseph Ewart had been secretary to Sir John Stepney, then was Secretary of the Berlin Embassy in 1785-7. In 1788-91 he was ambassador. For Anglo-Prussian relations and Ewart's work, see Dr. Luckwaldt's excellent monograph, "Die englisch-preussische Allianz von 1788," 51 *et seq.* (Leipzig 1902). By the kindness of General Sir Spencer Ewart, I was able to transcribe several of the letters of his forefather, Joseph Ewart. Some of them are published in an article in the "Edinburgh Review" for July 1909.

This passage probably explains why the Pitt Ministry, in sending Earl Cornwallis on an informal mission to Berlin, tied his hands by instructions of a stringent kind. Carmarthen on 2nd September cautioned the Earl not to commit this country in the slightest degree; and to hear much, but speak little to that "artful" monarch.

When such suspicions beset the interview, no good could result. On his side Frederick appears never to have taken the proposal seriously. He assured Cornwallis of his friendship for England, but remarked on the threatening state of things in Europe; France, Spain, Austria, and Russia were in alliance (which was false); Holland was in the power of France; Prussia and England were isolated, and, if united, were no match for the vast display of power opposed to them. The union between France and Austria was indissoluble (a very questionable statement in view of their opposing interests in the Netherlands); but it might be possible to arouse the jealousy of Catharine against Austria over the suggested partition of Turkey. As for France, she was seeking to make trouble for England everywhere, especially in India and Ireland. But he ended his jeremiad with praises of Pitt for his care of British finances. This tirade was evidently intended to discourage Pitt and to bring him as a suppliant for the alliance of Prussia. For if the Quadruple Alliance were a fact, what was to be gained by the two States remaining in isolation, especially as each of them had annoyed its neighbours? Frederick's real opinion appeared in the sharp rebuke which he sent to Count Lusi, his envoy at London, for venturing to suggest the desirability of an interview.[2]

The incident left the Pitt Ministry in worse straits than ever by revealing to all the world the friendless state of England. A note of anxiety may be detected in the letter which Pitt wrote to Harris on 13th October 1785. After referring to the growing prosperity of the country, as enhancing its prestige, he added that he would say nothing about Dutch or continental politics—"for they seem in truth still too mysterious to form any conjectures on the turn either of them may ultimately take."[1] The words deserve notice; for they refute the notion that Pitt had formed any definite system.[2] His only plan at this time was to wait until the horizon cleared. Much may be said for this cautious opportunism; but it had the disadvantage of leaving us isolated at a time of great danger. We had done enough to incur the displeasure of two most dangerous sovereigns, Catharine and Joseph, but not enough to avert its probable consequences.

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[1] Luckwaldt, 52, 53.

[2] "Cornwallis Corresp.," i, 202-11.

For the present, Ministers sought to recover the good will of Catharine. In semblance it was easily procurable. Vorontzoff for a time dangled before Carmarthen the prize of a Russian alliance, and sought to persuade him that the Empress was on the point of proposing it when she heard of Hanover joining the German League. The Austrian envoy, Kazeneck, also assured him that friendship with Russia would be the best means of preventing war with France. Carmarthen seems to have taken these offers at their face value and wrote to Harris that the road from London to Paris lay through Petersburg.[3] Similar proposals came from these envoys for some time; and Carmarthen cheered himself with a truly pathetic belief in their honesty.[4] Harris also, despite his knowledge of Catharine's anti-British bias, persisted in hoping for a return of her favour. He even drew up a memorandum recounting the advantages of an Anglo-Russo-Austrian League, for which Carmarthen was already angling; and in particular he deprecated any offer of alliance to Frederick, "unless compelled by events."[5] It is strange that

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," i, 157.

[2] I disagree with Herr Salomon ("Pitt") on this point. It seems to me that Pitt's policy was essentially tentative, and remained so up to the year 1788.

[3] B.M. Add. MSS., 28060. George III showed more sagacity than his Ministers, witness the phrase in his letter of 7th August to Pitt: "An experience of twenty years has taught me not to expect any return for the great assistance she [Catharine] has received from this country."

[4] As late as 5th February 1786 he wrote to Harris: "We are on more friendly terms with Russia than for a long time" (B.M. Add. MSS., 28061).

[5] I have published this Memorandum along with other documents bearing on the years 1785-7 in the "Eng. Hist. Rev." for 1909.

Pitt and Carmarthen did not see that the advances of the Imperial Courts were designed merely to keep England and Prussia apart. But, in truth, the fault lay mainly with Frederick the Great, whose spleen was incurable.

Meanwhile the course of events in the Netherlands should have brought Prussia and England to terms. They need not have been public, still less offensive in aim; for that would have brought about a close union of France with Russia as well as Austria, an event which Pitt no less than Frederick sought to avert. But why Pitt and Carmarthen should not have welcomed a secret defensive compact with Prussia it is hard to say. If the princes and counts of Germany did not hesitate to brave the wrath of Joseph by union with Prussia, why should Great Britain? Frederick's shiftiness may be granted. But at this crisis there was a motive which might be trusted to keep him staunch, namely, self-interest. Both England and Prussia sorely needed an ally; yet they held severely aloof.

In the early autumn of 1785, Joseph II brought severe pressure to bear upon the Dutch to cede Maestricht to him, and to throw open the navigation of the Scheldt below Antwerp. Hostilities were on the point of breaking out, when France skilfully intervened, offered her mediation, and prevailed on the disputants to accept the terms which she offered. By the Treaty of Fontainebleau (8 Nov. 1785) the Emperor agreed to waive his exorbitant claims in consideration of the payment of 15,000,000 florins, for the half of which sum the Court of Versailles became responsible. That so heavily burdened a State should add to its financial difficulties excited some surprise; but in the political sphere Vergennes gained a signal triumph. By becoming paymaster to Joseph, he kept that wayward ruler in French leading strings; and, by saving Maestricht and the Scheldt navigation to the Dutch, he ensured the supremacy of France in that land. This compact was followed two days later by a Franco-Dutch treaty of alliance whereby the Court of Versailles guaranteed the possessions of the United Provinces; and each of the two States undertook to furnish ships and men to the other in case of attack.[1]

Meanwhile Pitt awoke to a sense of the danger, and urged Harris to use his utmost endeavours (short of an open breach with France) to prevent the ratification of the treaty by the United Provinces. All that the envoy could do was to present to the States General at The Hague a Memorial declaring the continued interest taken by England in the affairs of the Republic. But of what avail was this academic statement without a conditional and secret offer of armed support, which everybody knew France would give rather than forego her triumph? Again, early in December, Pitt warned Carmarthen that Harris should "redouble every possible effort" to prevent the Franco-Dutch alliance.[1] This was merely to bid him fight with his hands tied.

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[1] Garden, "Traités," v, 60-72.

France now held a most commanding position in Europe. By the new compacts she influenced Hapsburg policy, she forced Frederick the Great into almost abject deference, she allured Catharine, and she controlled the Dutch Netherlands. This last triumph crowned the life-work of Vergennes. The recent treaties relieved him from the disagreeable alternative of choosing between Austria and the United Provinces in case of a rupture. They emphasized the isolation of England. Above all, they prepared the way for joint action of the French and Dutch East India Companies which might prove to be fatal to British ascendancy in India.[2]

The meagre correspondence of Pitt at this time contains scarcely a reference to this very serious crisis. His letters turn mainly on finance, Irish affairs, and domestic topics such as the purchase of Holwood. On the Dutch problem there is not a word except the curiously curt reference in his letter of October 6 to Grenville: "I have written to Lord Carmarthen on the Dutch business much as you seem to wish."[3] The phrase is interesting as marking the commencement of the influence which Grenville was soon to gain over Pitt in foreign affairs; but its nonchalance is astounding. In part, no doubt, the passivity of the Prime Minister resulted from the determination of George III to hold aloof as King of England from all complications, however much, as Elector of Hanover, he might irritate Austria and Russia. As we shall see in the next chapter, George was beginning to be alarmed at the growing expenses of his family, and viewed the Dutch crisis mainly as involving burdensome demands on the Civil List. Here, then, as at so many points in his career, Pitt was handicapped by the King.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 175.

[2] On 7th March 1786 Harris reported to Carmarthen joint actions of the Dutch and French in the East, and that eight Dutch warships were to sail thither with troops on board. (B.M. Add. MSS., 28061.) The possession of the Cape of Good Hope by the Dutch rendered our communications with India precarious.

[3] "Dropmore P.," i, 258.

But it is also probable that in the disappointing year 1785, marked by the failure of his Reform and Irish measures, he suppressed the concern which he must have felt at the deepening isolation of England. We must remember that he had formed a resolve to play a waiting game in foreign affairs. On August 8 he wrote to the Duke of Rutland that, if the commercial treaty with Ireland became law, and peace lasted for five years, England would be able to look any Power in Europe in the face.[1] That explains why he tied the hands of Harris at The Hague and sent to Berlin overtures so cautious as to be received with polite disdain. His great aim was to lessen the National Debt; and the year 1785, with all its disappointments, witnessed a most extraordinary rise in Consols, viz. from 54¼ to 73½. There was the strength of England's position. If she reduced her debt, while all the Continental Powers were ruinously increasing theirs, she must have the advantage when turmoil ended in war.

Pitt therefore adopted a policy of delay. So long as he could strengthen the navy, maintain the army at the ordinary peace footing, and enhance the nation's credit, he was content to bide his time, leaving Harris to combat French influence in Holland as best he could.[2] Such a policy was very far from brilliant; and, had not France in the next two years entered on a period of rapid decline, he might be censured for tamely waiting on events. For it is possible that a bold initiative at Whitehall in October, while Vergennes' Dutch treaties were taking shape, might have gained active support either from Prussia or from Joseph II, who had been on very cool terms with France. Pitt, however, preferred to hold back, even though the Bourbons gained control of the United Provinces. By his passivity in face of that diplomatic disaster we may measure his devotion to the cause of peace. And just as Queen Elizabeth often reassured her people at the gravest crisis by displays of frivolity, so too Pitt's absorption in tree planting at Holwood may have been a device for hiding his anxiety, reassuring the public, and preventing a fall in the Funds.

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[1] "Pitt-Rutland Corresp.," 111.

[2] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 172.

Serene hopefulness in the future of his country is a strong feature in the character of this great man; and we shall find occasions when he displayed this quality to excess. Certain it is that he never lost hope or relaxed his energies, even now, when Ministers and envoys evinced signs of gloom or despair. A proof of the prevalence of these feelings appears in one of the closing passages of a Memorandum which the Duke of Richmond, Master of the Ordnance, on 30th December 1785, sent to his colleague, Carmarthen. It was written owing to a singular circumstance, which reveals the impulsiveness of Pitt. The Duke had almost casually suggested the desirability of recovering some foothold in the Dutch Netherlands by inducing them to propose to include England in their recent treaty with France. This hint, which the Duke threw out in conversation, was at once taken up by Pitt, who, without consulting the Cabinet, urged Carmarthen to take steps to carry it into effect, and suggested that one of the Patriots might be bribed to make the proposal of including England, as if it were to test the sincerity of her offers of friendship. Of course the matter came to nothing; but the surprise of the Duke at Pitt's speedy adoption of the hint led him to descant on our isolation, and to harp on the well-worn theme of an alliance with Austria:—

Goodwood, December 30, 1785.

. . . If the Emperor and France keep well together, Leghorn will be also an inimical port,[1] as may Algiers and Marocco if their treaties with Spain go on. Holland seems lost to us both in Europe and the East Indies; and should the Emperor and Russia unite with France, Sweden must follow, and Denmark dare not be our friend. Under such circumstances what are we to look for but utter ruin! If France is disengaged on the Continent and assisted by Spain, Holland and Russia (to say nothing of America), we must be attacked with greatly superior forces in the East and West Indies and perhaps in Canada; but, what is still worse, we shall undoubtedly have the war brought into Ireland, and I very much doubt whether we can by any means avoid that country being divided, and a large part acting against us. If any of these points of attack succeed, and above all, if our navy should meet with any disaster from superior forces, the next step will be to bring the war into this country, and the best issue of such an event must be attended with much distress. In short, the natural and political advantages of France are such that I very much fear the consequences. To divert her attention by stirring up some powerful enemy on the Continent has been long and universally considered as our only resource, and yet unfortunately we seem to be obstructing the only Power capable of creating that diversion, which is the Emperor. . . .[1]

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[1] The Grand-Duke of Tuscany was a Hapsburg prince.

It was amidst fears so intense and prejudices so deep-seated that Pitt undertook the negotiations for a friendly commercial treaty with France which is the chief event of the year 1786.

[1] Pitt MSS., 332.

CHAPTER XIV

L'ENTENTE CORDIALE

(1786)

Thy father's fame with thine fair Truth shall blend
His vigour saved from foreign foes the land,
Thy prudence makes each foreign foe a friend.

REV. W. MASON TO PITT, 1786.

THE nation is but the family writ large; and, just as families after a ruinous quarrel sometimes win their way back towards prudence and friendliness, so too nations now and again feel the force of the sociable instincts. Such a time was now at hand for Great Britain and France. The eight years of the American War of Independence had increased the debt of the Island Power by £115,000,000;[1] and so wasteful had been the conduct of the war by France that in the years 1778-1783, she had exceeded the total of her already large peace expenditure by £66,000,000.[2] Further, as that struggle brought to her few results beyond the satisfaction of rending the British Empire in twain, she was scarcely the better for it. In truth, while defeat led patriotic Britons to tread the humble paths of retrenchment and reform, the triumph of France allured her politicians into the stately avenues ending in bankruptcy and Revolution.

During the period of war, philosophy, science, and industry had been waging their peaceful campaigns; and now in the exhaustion or quiescence which beset both peoples, the still small voice of reason was heard. The responsiveness of thought in England and France is one of the most remarkable facts in the eighteenth century. Though political rivalry had five times over embroiled those peoples in deadly strife, yet their thinkers had never ceased to feel the thrill of sympathetic ideas, originated by "the natural enemy," which proved to be no less potent than the divulsive forces of statecraft. The Marconigrams of thought pass through storms, whether atmospheric or political; and it may be that finally the nations will become sounding-boards responding more and more to progressive ideas, and less and less to the passions of mankind.

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[1] Dr. Cunningham, "Eng. Industry and Commerce" (pt. ii, 546).

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 28063. Eden to Carmarthen, 10th January 1788.

Certainly the mental sympathy of England and France in that century was strongly marked. As is well known, the philosophy of Locke supplied Voltaire and Rousseau with most of the weapons of their intellectual armoury. From the English constitution Montesquieu drew many of the contentions which lend significance to his *Esprit des Lois.* The ideas of naturalism and sensibility were wafted hither from the garner of Rousseau. Philanthropy became a force in both lands about the same time but in diverse ways In France it was in the main anti-clerical, springing from the indignant protests of Voltaire against atrocities such as that inflicted by the Church on Calas. In this land it may be traced to the Wesleyan revival, the motive which impelled Howard, Clarkson, and Wilberforce being distinctly religious.

On a lower plane we notice the immense vogue of English fashions in France, and of French *modes* in England. *Grands seigneurs* sought to copy our field sports, swathed themselves in English *redingotes*, and rose in the stirrups *à l'Anglaise.* The Duc de Chartres (the future Philippe Egalité) set the rage for English ways and fabrics, so that French industries seriously suffered. In 1785 the French Minister complained to our envoy that French draperies could not be sold unless they looked like English stuffs.[1] Britons returned the compliment. They swarmed into France. We find our envoy complaining that English families were settling in every French town, so that it might be well to devise an absentee tax which would drive them homewards.[2]

But no influence helped on the new cosmopolitanism so much as the spread of ideas of Free Trade. Here the honours lie with French thinkers. It was by residence in France and contact with the *Economistes*, Quesnay and Turgot, that Adam Smith clarified and developed the ideas soon to be embodied in the

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[1] "F. O.," France, 18.

[2] *Ibid.*

"Wealth of Nations." Here we may note a curious paradox. The practical islanders supplied their neighbours with political ideas which, when barbed by Voltaire and Rousseau, did much to gall France into violent action. On the other hand, the more nimble-witted people gave to its trading rival the fiscal principles (neglected at home) which furthered the extension of its commerce. Venomous use might be made of this contrast by that fast diminishing band of Anglophobes who see in all British actions perfidious attempts to ruin France; but it must be remembered that everything depends on the men who introduce and apply the new ideas, and that, whereas France was unfortunate in the men who promulgated and worked the political principles learnt in England, the islanders on the contrary had the wisest of counsellors. Contrast Voltaire, Rousseau, and Robespierre with Adam Smith and Pitt, and the riddle is solved at once.

Amidst the exhaustion of war, both nations were now ready to listen to all that was most convincing in the arguments of the *Economistes* and of Adam Smith. These exponents of the nascent science of Economics rendered a memorable service to the cause of peace by urging nations, like sensible traders, to rejoice in the prosperity of their neighbours, not in their poverty. Propinquity, said they, should be an incentive to free intercourse, not to hatred. Adam Smith pointed out in his "Wealth of Nations" (1776) that France could offer us a market eight times as populous as that of our North American colonies, and twenty-four times as advantageous if the frequency of the returns were reckoned. The British market, he said, would be equally profitable to France. He laughed to scorn the notion that France would always drain Great Britain of her specie, and showed that the worship of the "balance of trade" was accountable for much folly and bloodshed.[1] It is difficult to say whether these views had much hold on the English people. If we may judge from the passions aroused by Pitt's Irish Resolutions, it was slight. On the other hand the absence of any vehement opposition to the commercial treaty with France a year later, shows either that public opinion here was moving forwards, or that the Opposition felt it impossible to bring to bear on the absolute government of Louis XVI those irritating arguments which had had so potent an influence on the Irish people.

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[1] "Wealth of Nations," bk. iv, ch. iii.

The influence of the *Economistes* in France probably did not count for very much. But they had shown their power during the brief but beneficent ministry of Turgot; and even when Marie Antoinette procured the dismissal of that able but austere Minister, one of his disciples remained in office, and was now Minister of Foreign Affairs. This was Vergennes. Few men at that time did more for the cause of human brotherhood than this man, whom Carlyle described as "solid phlegmatic . . . like some dull punctual clerk." A man's importance depends, after all, not so much on external brilliance as on the worth of his achievements; a statesman who largely decided the Franco-American alliance, the terms of peace in 1783, and the resumption of friendly relations with England, need not fear the verdict of history. In a little known fragment written in April 1776, Vergennes thus outlines an intelligent policy:

> Wise and happy will that nation be which will be the first to adapt its policy to the new circumstances of the age, and to consent to see in its colonies nothing more than allied provinces and no longer subject States of the mother-land. Wise and happy will that nation be which is the first to be convinced that commercial policy consists wholly in employing lands in the way most advantageous for the owners, also the arms of the people in the most useful way, that is, as self-interest will enjoin if there is no coercion; and that all the rest is only illusion and vanity. When the total separation of America [from Great Britain] has forced everybody to recognize this truth and weaned the European nations from commercial jealousy, it will remove one important cause of war, and it is difficult not to desire an event which ought to bring this boon to the human race.[1]

Two years later, when France drew the sword on behalf of the Americans, Britons naturally scoffed at these philanthropic pretensions. The conduct of her Court and nobles was certainly open to the charge of hypocrisy, especially when Louis XVI issued the ordinance of 1781 restricting the higher commissions in his army to those nobles who could show sixteen quarters of nobility. Singular, indeed, to battle for democracy in the new world and yet draw tighter the bands of privilege in France! Yet Vergennes, Necker, and other friends of reform were not responsible for this regal folly; and they were doubtless sincere in hoping that the downfall of England's colonial system would inaugurate a new era in the politics and commerce of the world.

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[1] "Politique de tous les Cabinets de l'Europe . . .," ii, 402-3. It contains some "Mémoires" of Vergennes.

A proof of the sincerity of Vergennes is to be found in the 18th Article of the Treaty of Versailles (1783), which stipulated that, immediately after the ratification of the treaty, commissioners should be appointed to prepare new commercial arrangements between the two nations "on the basis of reciprocity and mutual convenience, which arrangements are to be terminated and concluded within the space of two years from the 1st of January 1784." For this clause Lords Shelburne and Grantham on the British side were chiefly responsible; and it is certain that the former warmly approved it.[1] Pitt, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in that Ministry, doubtless also welcomed the proposal; but I have found no sign of his opinions on the subject. The credit for this enlightened proposal may probably be assigned to Vergennes, seeing that he dictated terms, while the British Cabinet accepted them. There is a ring of sincerity in his words written on 1st February 1783 to de Rayneval, then his diplomatic agent in London: "It is an old prejudice, which I do not share, that there is a natural incompatibility between these two peoples. . . . Every nation must strive for the utmost prosperity; but this cannot be based on exclusiveness, otherwise it would be a nullity. One does not get rich from very poor nations."[2] This seems to be an echo of Adam Smith's dictum: "A nation that would enrich itself by foreign trade is certainly most likely to do so when its neighbours are all rich, industrious, and commercial nations."

Statesmen on this side of the Channel were slower than their rivals in seeking to realize these enlightened aims. The fall of Shelburne's Ministry and the triumph of the Fox-North Coalition led to no important change in the Treaty, which was signed at Versailles in September 1783; but the commercial treaty was shelved for the present. With all his enlightenment in matters political, Fox had a limited outlook in the commercial sphere. He held the old Whig views, which for wellnigh a century had been narrowly national and mercantilist. Further, he hotly contested the claim put forward by the French

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[1] Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne," iii, 260.

[2] "Précis du Traité de Commerce de 1786," by Count His de Butenval (Paris, 1869), 25.

[3] "Wealth of Nations," bk iv, ch. iii.

Government to consider all trading arrangements at an end, including those of the Treaty of Utrecht, if no arrangement were formed before the end of the year 1785.[1]

Such was the state of things when Pitt and Carmarthen took office at the close of the year 1783. The events described in the previous chapter will have enabled the reader to understand the need of great caution on the part of Pitt. Though the language of Vergennes was redolent of human brotherhood, his actions were often shrewdly diplomatic. In the United Provinces, as we have seen, his policy wore a twofold aspect. While supporting the Patriots, he claimed to be supporting the cause of democracy, but he also dealt a blow at British influence. Though he maintained the Austrian alliance, he coquetted with Prussia; and, while dallying with the Czarina in order to keep out England, he made a profitable bargain with Russia's enemy, Sweden, respecting Gothenburg. Thus on all sides he advanced the cause of enlightenment and the interests of France.

It is not surprising that this dextrous union of philosophy and statecraft (which resembles that by which Napoleon utilized Rousseau's advocacy of natural boundaries) earned the hatred of nearly every Briton. Carmarthen and Harris were deeply imbued with these feelings; and it is certain that Pitt, while taking the outstretched hand of Vergennes, half expected a dagger-thrust. We find Grenville writing to Carmarthen on 25th February 1785 concerning a plan, which Pitt had formed, for provisionally buying over a Mr. D. S. M. at Paris to send confidential news, especially respecting the plans and movements of the French in the East Indies. He was to receive 60 guineas a month for news sent to Daniel Hailes, Secretary at the British Embassy, and 250 guineas at the end of three months if his information gave satisfaction.[2] Other items make it clear that Pitt viewed with concern the activity of France in the East. The formation of a French East India Company in March 1785 was a threatening sign;[3] and in the summer came a report from Sir Robert Ainslie, British ambassador at Constantinople, that France was intriguing to gain a foothold in Egypt on the Red Sea. Part of his despatch of 23rd July 1785 is worth quoting:

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[1] Butenval, 23.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 28060.

[3] "F. O.," France, 14, Dorset to Carmarthen, 31st March 1785. See, too, L. Pingaud Choiseul-Gouffier, "La France en Orient sous Louis XVI" (Paris, 1887).

> ... The Porte has varied in her general opposition to establishing a trade through Egypt, by opening the navigation of the Red Sea to the flag of Christian Powers. The present undertaking and the late French mission to Cairo was in consequence of a plan devised by the late French ambassador to ruin our East India Company by an illicit trade under the protection of France, in which it was thought the Company's servants would join most heartily. It is clear that France adopted this scheme, but I can pledge myself the Porte was not consulted and that she will never protect a project by far more dangerous to her own interests than even to ours. It seems Count Priest hoped to elude the Ottoman bad humour by employing the navigation of the flags of all Christian Powers indiscriminately and to secure his trade by the protection of the Beys of Egypt, who certainly have aimed at absolute independence ever since the time of Ali Bey.[1]

The correspondence of Sir James Harris with Carmarthen shows that our Ministry kept a watchful eye on any symptoms which portended a union of the Dutch East India Company with that of France. Indeed, as we shall see, the reasons which prompted the resolute action of Pitt at the crisis of 1787 in Holland were largely based on naval and colonial considerations. Matters in the East were in an uneasy state. Once again, in January 1786, Hailes reported that the unsettled state of Egypt was known to be attracting the notice of the French Foreign Office, probably with a view to conquest.[2] The efforts which France put forth in 1785-6 for the construction of a great naval fortress at Cherbourg also claimed attention; and Britons were not calmed by the philosophic reflections of some peace-loving Gauls that the completion of that mighty harbour would render it impossible for England to make war on France.

In view of the lowering political horizon, is it surprising that Pitt was very cautious in responding to the proposals of the French Cabinet for a friendly commercial treaty? It is incorrect to say, as Harris did in a rather peevish outburst, that Pitt was too occupied with Parliament to attend to foreign affairs.[3] We now know that he paid much attention to them though the pressing problems of finance, India, Ireland, and Reform perforce held the first place in his thoughts. But he must have desired to gain a clearer insight into a very complex situation before he committed his country to a commercial treaty with France.[1] To have done so prematurely might have prevented the formation of that closer political union with Russia and Austria which British statesmen long and vainly struggled to effect.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 337.

[2] *Ibid.*, 333. Hailes to Fraser, 26th January 1786.

[3] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 112.

But another motive probably weighed even more with Pitt in favour of delay. We have seen how fondly and tenaciously he clung to the hope of a commercial union between Great Britain and Ireland through the session of 1785. Surely it was of prime importance to complete the fiscal system of the British Islands before he entered into negotiations with a foreign Power. To have hurried on the French commercial treaty before that with Ireland was concluded would have been a grave tactical error. As a firm economic unit, Great Britain and Ireland could hope for far better terms from France than as separate entities; and this consideration almost certainly supplies the reason for Pitt's extreme anxiety to assure the industrial unity of these islands before he began to bargain with France; while it may also explain the desire of Vergennes to press on the negotiation before the British Islands had acquired fiscal solidarity. In fine, everything conspired to impose on Pitt a passive attitude. Vergennes, as the victor, could propose terms; Pitt, representing the beaten Power, could only await them. Such was the situation in 1784-5. An autocracy founded on privilege seemed to be threatening our political existence, and yet made commercial proposals which might have come from Adam Smith himself.

The British Government responded to them very slowly. In the spring of 1784 it appointed George Craufurd to act as our commissioner at Versailles for the drafting of a commercial arrangement, as was required by the treaty of 1783; but he did not receive his instructions until September. Rayneval, who had the full confidence of Vergennes, was the French commissioner; and at their first interview he asked that the principle of reciprocity should form the basis of the negotiations. To this the British Court demurred, and the affair remained in suspense for some months. On 3rd March 1785 Craufurd wrote to Carmarthen that he was still waiting for replies to his notes of 30th September and 25th November, and that Vergennes had repeatedly expressed to the Duke of Dorset, the British ambassador, his annoyance at the loss of time. His resentment had recently taken a tangible form; he had issued an ordinance (*arrêt*) imposing a tax of sixty per cent. on all carriages imported from the United Kingdom. This action led Carmarthen to break his long silence on commercial matters and to protest against the tax as tending to "prevent that spirit of conciliation or friendly liberality so necessary at this time to produce any good effect for those commercial arrangements now in contemplation."[1] He also hinted that Great Britain might with perfect justice retaliate. Further, he repudiated the French claim, once again raised, that all commercial arrangements would lapse by the end of 1785, and maintained that the Treaty of Utrecht would afterwards equally be in force. After further delays Rayneval demanded that there should be absolute reciprocity in their commercial dealings, the basis of the most favoured nation being adopted where it did not infringe existing treaties. To this Carmarthen sent the following reply on 5th August:

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 157.

> Mutual benefits and reciprocal advantages are indisputably the objects we are inclined to pursue in the adjustment of this business; but to say at once that the two nations shall be entitled to those privileges which are alone allowed to the most favoured nations, by way of a basis to the negotiation and without weighing the nature and consequence of such privileges is totally impossible; and of this I think M. de Rayneval must be convinced when he recollects that it was a stipulation of this sort contained in the 8th and 9th articles of the Treaty of Commerce of Utrecht in 1713 that prevented those articles from ever being carried into effect.[2]

Considering that reciprocity and the most favoured nation treatment had been urged by Rayneval at his first interview with Craufurd in September 1784, it is difficult to see why Carmarthen felt flurried by the present proposal.

Meanwhile Vergennes had struck another heavy blow. He issued an *arrêt* forbidding foreigners to share in the French trade to the Barbary States, and on 10th July he prohibited the import of foreign cottons, muslins, gauzes, and linens into France. At once there arose a cry of distress and rage throughout Great Britain; and Carmarthen sent an energetic remonstrance against this further proof of the ill-humour of the French Government. Hailes at once informed him that the two *arrêts* had "been suspended with more forbearance than could reasonably have been expected, considering the detriment French manufactures have sustained, and the great advantage we have derived from the balance of trade being so much and so long in our favour. People in general think that this strong measure will hasten the conclusion of an arrangement between us."[1] Vergennes soon assured Hailes of his desire for a friendly arrangement, but he added that meanwhile the French Government had to look to its own needs and stop the enormous influx of British goods, for which the French public clamoured. Commerce and finance were then the chief care of the French Government. On 25th August Hailes reported the pains secretly taken by the French to attract skilled English workmen. On 22nd September Craufurd stated that further disagreeable events would happen unless some progress were made with the commercial treaty; Rayneval observed that, if we objected to reciprocity and the most favoured nation basis, it was for us to make a proposal. On 21st October Vergennes issued another unfriendly *arrêt* prohibiting the import of iron, steel, and cutlery; but Hailes continued to assure Carmarthen that Vergennes and Rayneval were anxious for a final settlement and that the *arrêts* were "meant to stimulate us to a conclusion of the commercial treaty as soon as possible."[2]

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[1] "F. O.," France, 16.

[2] *Ibid.* The British Parliament in 1716 abrogated these clauses in favour of carlier and less liberal arrangements. Louis XIV consented to this.

Pitt now began to bestir himself on this matter. In order to have at Paris a commissioner abler, or more acceptable, than Craufurd seems to have been, he made overtures to William Eden (the future Lord Auckland) with a view to his acting as special commissioner in his place. In the Auckland Papers at the British Museum there is an unpublished letter of Pitt to Eden, dated Brighthelmstone, 16th October 1785, in answer to one in which Eden had hinted that he would prefer the Speakership of the House of Commons, as Cornwall

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[1] "F. O.," France, 16. Hailes to Carmarthen, 4th August 1785.

[2] *Ibid.*, Hailes to Carmarthen, 1st December 1785. The Chambers of Commerce at Paris, Versailles, and Montpellier protested against the *arrêts*. See Butenval, *op. cit.*, 36.

"obviously suffered while in the chair."[1] Pitt's reply is as follows:

> It gives me great satisfaction to find that there remains no obstacle to your acceptance of either of the situations mentioned in my letter to Mr. Beresford, and that nothing seems left to settle but the mode of carrying such an arrangement into effect. I confess I am not aware of any means which could properly be taken to induce the Speaker to retire at present; and therefore in the interval I should very much wish to accelerate the execution of the other idea.[2]

Pitt then refers to some difficulties which make it desirable to defer the actual appointment until the session had begun. He suggests conferences, especially as in a fortnight he would be nearer to Eden. All this bespeaks a degree of nonchalance quite remarkable considering the importance of the questions at stake. Everything tends to show that Pitt felt far less interest in this negotiation than in that with Ireland, to which he had very properly given the first place. The effort to free trade between the two islands having now failed, there was no reason for further postponing the discussions with France.

Such seems to me the reasonable way of explaining his procedure. The contention of the French historian of this treaty, that Pitt was opposed to the commercial arrangement with France, and was only forced into it by the hostile *arrêts*, is untenable.[3] He maintains that it was the last *arrêt*, that of 21st October, which brought Pitt to his senses—"Mr. Pitt, who did not *then* wish for war, surrendered." This phrase reveals the prejudice of the writer, who, publishing his work at the time of Cobden's negotiations with Napoleon III, obviously set himself to prove that Free Trade was French both in the origin of the idea and in the carrying out in practice by statesmen. Passing over these claims, we should remember that Pitt had made his first overtures to Eden in the first week in October, some ten days before the appearance of the *arrêt*, which, in Butenval's version, compelled him to "surrender."

Pitt acted with much circumspection. He urged Eden to collect information on trade matters; but it seems that not until December did the new Council of Trade set on foot any official inquiries.[1] Perhaps the Irish negotiation, which was hurried on too fast, had given him pause. Meanwhile, however, France had gained another success by imposing her mediation on the Emperor Joseph II and the Dutch Government and settling the disputes between them. As appeared in the previous chapter, this treaty led to the conclusion of an alliance (10th November 1785) both political and commercial, with the United Provinces, which emphasized the isolation of England and secured the Dutch markets for France. Thus the delay in meeting the advances of Vergennes had been doubly prejudicial to British interests, and it must be confessed that Pitt's *début* in European diplomacy was far from brilliant.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 110. Eden to Pitt, 12th October 1785. See, too, "Carlisle Papers," 644.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 34420.

[3] Butenval, 39

If, however, we look into details, we find that Carmarthen hampered the negotiations at the outset by refusing to accept the "most favoured nation" basis of negotiation, and by throwing on France the responsibility for not proposing some "practicable" scheme. On 14th October 1785 he wrote to Hailes that Great Britain very much desired a commercial treaty with France, and was waiting for "specific proposals" from her; and again, on 4th November, that matters seemed hopeless, owing to Rayneval's obstinate adherence to his original scheme.[2] This pedantic conduct was fast enclosing the whole affair in a vicious circle. Meanwhile the sands of time were running out: and it seemed that England would be left friendless and at the mercy of any commercial arrangement which France chose to enforce after the close of the year. It is strange that Pitt did not insist on the furtherance of a matter which he judged to be "of great national importance." [3] But his only step for the present was to write a letter, signed by Carmarthen, asking for an extension of time beyond the end of that year. In reply Vergennes expressed the satisfaction of Louis XVI that Great Britain was seriously desirous of framing a commercial treaty and granted six months' extension of time.[4] A year was finally granted.

Notwithstanding this further proof of Vergennes' good will, the negotiation began under conditions so unfavourable to Great Britain as to call for a skilled negotiator; but the career of

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[1] Carmarthen to Eden, 9th December 1785 (B.M. Add. MSS., 34420).

[2] Pitt MSS., 333.

[3] Pitt to Eden, 4th December 1785, in "Auckland Journals," i, 87.

[4] Vergennes to Carmarthen, 14th December 1785, in Pitt MSS., 333.

William Eden warranted the hope that he would bear the burden of responsibility triumphantly. Born in 1744, and educated at Eton and Christchurch, he early showed marked abilities, which were sharpened by practice at the Bar. He also devoted his attention to social and economic questions; and when, in 1780, he became Chief Secretary for Ireland under the Earl of Carlisle, he did much to promote the prosperity of that land, especially by helping to found the Bank of Ireland. He took keen interest in the treatment of prisoners, and proposed to substitute hard labour for transportation. The reform of the penal laws also engaged his attention. He had long been attached to Lord North's party, though his views were more progressive than theirs. By his marriage with the sister of Sir Gilbert Elliot he came into touch with the Whigs; and, though his petulant conduct in 1782 with regard to the resignation of the lord-lieutenancy by Carlisle caused general annoyance, he was largely instrumental in bringing about the Fox-North Coalition. Consistency sat lightly upon Eden; and when, in 1785, he hotly opposed Pitt's Irish proposals, similar in effect to his own of some years earlier, he was roundly abused by one of his friends for his factiousness.[1] The same correspondent soon had cause to upbraid him still further for his conduct in the autumn of 1785, when, leaving the Opposition, he went over to the Government side in order to act as special commissioner at Paris. The Duke of Portland coldly commended him for placing country above party; but the many saw in the move only enlightened self-interest and felt no confidence in him. Wraxall expressed the prevalent opinion when he said that there "existed in Eden's physiognomy, even in his manner and deportment, something which did not convey the impression of plain dealing or inspire confidence."[2]

Undoubtedly Eden was the ablest negotiator whom Pitt could have chosen for a difficult commercial bargain; Wedgwood at once wrote to say that he would have been his choice; and the remarks as to Pitt filching away a prominent member of the Opposition are clearly prompted by spite. After hearing much evidence on commercial matters at the Committee of Council, Eden set out for Paris at the end of March 1786, and was welcomed by Vergennes as a kindred soul. The Duke of Dorset was somewhat offended at his coming, and held aloof. Fortunately he found it desirable to take a long holiday in England, during which time the affairs of the embassy were ably carried on by Eden and Hailes. A popular song of the day referred to this in the lines:

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34420. Letter of John Lees, 1st April 1785.

[2] "Auckland Journals," i, 89; Wraxall, iv, 229.

For Dorset at cricket can play
And leave Billy Eden in France, sir.

Dorset's services were, in fact, mainly social. He was liked by Marie Antoinette; and his *thés dansants* were frequented by the leading nobles.[1]

On Eden, then, and Pitt (for Carmarthen felt no trust in the French) lay the chief burden of the negotiations. It is clear that Pitt now took a keen interest in the affair; and as Vergennes, Rayneval, and Calonne (Minister of Finance) showed a marked desire to come to a fair compromise, the matter was soon in good train. The chief difficulties arose from the suspicions of Carmarthen and the desire of Jenkinson, head of the Council of Trade, to drive a hard bargain with France. Pitt could not be indifferent to the opinions of his colleagues; and his experience of British manufacturers was such as to make him press for the best possible terms. That he still felt some distrust of the Court of Versailles is clear from his letter of 19th April 1786 to Eden that their financial embarrassments were such as "to secure, at least for a time, a sincere disposition to peace."[2] By that time, too, he must have received Eden's letter of 13th April marked "Private and confidential," which referred in glowing terms to the prospects of the negotiation:

> It is a circumstance which I shall think a just subject of pride to us both in the present age and of merit with posterity if the result should be what at this moment seems probable. . . . France shows a disposition to encourage our trade if we remove the senseless and peevish distinctions which fill so many lines in our Book of Rates; and a decided resolution to obstruct it as much as possible if those distinctions are suffered to remain. In the same time all the speculations and exertions of our trade with this Kingdom are suspended, and the manufactures, the navigation and the revenue are suffering. Besides, all the trading

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[1] J. Flammermont, "Correspondances des Agents diplomatiques étrangers avant la Révolution," 508.

[2] "Auckland Journals," i, 106.

> and manufacturing parts of England are at this hour disposed to go much greater lengths than are now suggested. . . . It is even highly possible that this treaty may form a new epoch in history.[1]

Over against the enthusiasm of Eden we may set the distrust of Carmarthen, as evinced in his statement to that envoy on 29th April, that if France could ever be sincere, Eden would doubtless bring the bargain to a successful issue.[2] Far less complimentary were his references to Eden in private letters to Dorset and Harris. From the former he inquired: "How is our paragon of perfection relished in France?"[3] In a letter to Harris, who constantly maintained that Eden was playing the game for Versailles, not for London, Carmarthen referred to "the absurd and officious letter of our great commercial negotiator."[4] It is well to remember these jealousies; for, as Harris was the bosom friend of Carmarthen, he succeeded in persuading him that the whole negotiation with France was a trick of our arch-enemy. The letter of Harris, which called forth Carmarthen's ironical reply, ended with the statement that France sought "to depress us everywhere, to keep us in an isolated and unconnected state, till such time as they think they can cripple us irrecoverably by an open hostile attack."[5] These suspicions must have been passed on to Pitt after due sifting; and it speaks much for the evenness and serenity of his mind that he persevered with the negotiation in spite of the prejudices of his Foreign Minister. Naturally, also, he kept the affair in his own hands.

In truth, Pitt occupied a position intermediate between that of the incurably suspicious Carmarthen and of the pleased and rather self-conscious Eden. When the latter very speedily arrived at a preliminary agreement, or Projet, with Rayneval, and begged that it should be adopted as speedily, and with as few alterations as possible, Pitt subjected it to friendly but close scrutiny. His reply of 10th May has been printed among the Auckland Journals; but his criticisms were even more practical in a long letter of 26th May, which is among the Pitt Papers. The following sentences are of special interest:

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[1] Pitt MSS., 110. I quote fully only from those letters which have not been published.

[2] "Auckland Journals," i, 112.

[3] B.M. Add. MSS., 28061. Letter of 19th May 1786.

[4] *Ibid.* Letter of 12th December 1786.

[5] *Ibid.*

> The Principles on which the Projet is founded are undoubtedly those on which it is to be wished that this business may be finally concluded, both as they tend to the mutual advantage of the two Countries in their commercial intercourse, and as they include the abolition of useless and injurious distinctions. But on the fullest consideration it has not appeared to His Majesty's servants that it would be proper to advise the immediate conclusion of a treaty on the footing of that Projet without some additions to it which may tend to give a more certain and permanent effect to these principles . . . In addition to this, the Projet, as it now stands affords no security that general prohibitions or prohibitory duties may not at any time take place in either Country to the exclusion of whatever may happen to be the chief articles of trade from the other. It is true that the same motives which should guide both parties in the present negotiation might for a long time prevent their adopting a conduct so contrary to the spirit of the proposed agreement. But it cannot be the wish of either Court to trust to this security only. We ought by all the means in our power to remove even the possibility of future jealousy on these subjects. And it appears from the observations of the French Government on the first sketch of this Projet that they felt the force of this remark. There can therefore be no doubt of their readiness to concur in anything which can give it a greater degree of stability and certainty. And we shall probably arrive sooner at the great object—a solid and comprehensive settlement of the commercial intercourse between the two countries than by beginning with a Preliminary Treaty, unexceptionable indeed in its principles, but which would necessarily reserve some very important points for separate discussion, and would in the meantime leave the whole system incomplete and precarious.[1]

Pitt then pointed out to Eden that the discussion of a compact of a temporary nature would tend to unsettle the minds of traders and perhaps even to discredit the whole undertaking. Accordingly he enclosed a Declaration, which comprised the substance of the French Projet, but gave it a more permanent form and set limits to the duties which might thereafter be levied. The letter shows that he had got over his first suspicions and was now working for a more thorough and permanent settlement than that sketched by Rayneval. The draft of the British Declaration is in Pitt's writing—a proof that he had taken this matter largely into his own hands. The replies of Eden to him are both long and frequent; but most of those preserved in the British Museum are too faded to be legible. In that of 6th June he warned Pitt that France was ready to settle matters on friendly terms, but, as there were many intrigues against the treaty, Pitt should conclude it promptly. More favourable terms might possibly be gained for British cottons and steel; but it would be best not to press the Versailles Cabinet too hard.[1]

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[1] Pitt MSS., 333.

Pitt, however, refused to hurry matters. Indeed, the only part of this long effusion which he heeded, seems to have been that respecting steel and cottons. He further distressed Eden by his action with regard to silks. Under pressure from the London silk-workers, he found it necessary to continue to exclude all foreign silk-goods,[2] which caused Eden to remark on 17th June: "With what face I am to propose the admission of English cottons and the exclusion of French silks I do not well foresee."[3]

Most of the official letters between Pitt and Eden will be found in Lord Auckland's Journals. We will therefore glance only at some of their letters which have not been published. They show that Pitt sought by all possible means to lessen the duties on British cottons and hardware imported into France, and that he demurred to the abrogation of the Methuen Treaty with Portugal (1703) which had accorded to her wines exceptionally favourable treatment. Discussions on these and other topics were retarded by the long debates at Westminster concerning the Sinking Fund and Warren Hastings: so that on 13th July Eden ironically informed Pitt that all his letters to him since 10th June had miscarried. The close of the session (11th July) left Pitt freer for diplomatic affairs; he threw himself into the bargaining with much zest, and Eden more than once hinted that a great outcry would arise in France if their Ministers gave way to our demands.

Nevertheless, Pitt struggled hard to obtain the best possible terms not only for Great Britain but also for Ireland. Despite Eden's repeated appeals for urgency, he asked the Duke of Rutland, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to induce the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Speaker, and Beresford to come to London for the purpose of advising him on several matters that concerned Ireland, especially as to the admission or exclusion of French linens. This further delay wrung Eden's heart, and he wrote on 31st August: "Your political courage goes beyond mine, for I suppose that you look without anxiety on this fortnight's delay, which we are giving. In truth, if it is given in politeness to Ireland, it is a great compliment; for it is impossible to do more for Ireland than we have done."[1] He then made the noteworthy prophecy that, as the treaty could not possibly adjust all the topics relating to the trade of Britain and Ireland, it would lead up to a right settlement between the two islands. Certainly Eden equalled Pitt in foresight, however much he fell short of him in coolness, determination, and bargaining power.

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[1] This letter of 6th June has no date of the year, and it has been bound up in vol. 28064 of the Add. MSS. in the British Museum for the year 1789 of the Auckland MSS. Internal evidence shows that the year should be 1786.

[2] Their memorial, dated 22nd February 1786, is from the London silk trade (B.M. Add. MSS., 34420). It states that "no alteration or modification whatsoever, short of the present prohibition of all foreign wrought silks, can ensure the silk trade to this country."

[3] Pitt MSS., 110.

These qualities appear very forcibly in the Anglo-French negotiation. It is probable that Pitt bargained too closely; but the reason is apparent if one looks at the scores of petitions that reached him from alarmed manufacturers. Lancashire was well to the front in its demands for favourable terms; and we therefore find Pitt holding out for only a 5 per cent. duty in France on British cottons. To this Rayneval retorted by claiming at least 20 per cent.—"M. de Vergennes was of opinion," wrote Eden, "for 15 per cent., and M. de Calonne, after much dispute, and by the aid of a paper in which I had urged for 5 per cent., split the difference and carried it for 10 (but with great doubts)."[2] Calonne, the cheerful and prodigal Controller of Finances, now began to take a closer interest in the treaty; he inveighed against Pitt for prohibiting French silks while expecting the almost free entry of British cottons, and said that there were 60,000 workers at Lyons who would curse him for this treaty. This explains why the French negotiators once again held out for 15 per cent., and, when that was rejected by Pitt, finally fixed it at 12 per cent.

Pitt also struggled to gain easier terms for Irish linens in France, and suggested that if this were conceded, the Dublin Parliament would probably accept the Anglo-French treaty *in toto*.[3] On the subject of hardware Pitt fought for the interests of Birmingham, as appears in the draft of a long despatch to Eden, of 4th September, with many corrections and additions in his writing. Very significant is the last sentence, which is in his hand:

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[1] "Pitt-Rutland Corresp.," 158; "Beaufort Papers" (Hist. MSS. Commission), 353.

[2] Pitt MSS., 110. Eden to Pitt, 23rd August.

[3] *Ibid.* Pitt to Eden, 12th September.

> If you cannot obtain a reduction to 5 or 7½ per cent. on iron, copper, or brass, you will endeavour to gain it on iron alone, that being a point which H. M.'s servants have most earnestly at heart, and in which the reasoning above stated seems conclusive in our favour. This is a point to be pressed to the utmost, but if you should find it *absolutely* impossible to carry it, it should not ultimately prevent your signing the treaty.[1]

The treaty, signed at Versailles on 26th September 1786, may be thus summarized: It granted complete freedom of navigation and trading rights between the two nations for their European dominions. The subjects of either kingdom were thenceforth free to enter the lands of the other without licence or passport, and free of any capitation tax—a privilege most unusual in those days—and to enjoy perfect religious liberty. In regard to the most important of French exports, namely, wine, Great Britain agreed to place her neighbour on the footing of the most favoured nation by lowering the duties to the level of those imposed on Portuguese wines. The duties on French vinegar and oil were also greatly reduced. The following articles nominally concerned both nations, but in practice applied almost entirely to British imports into France. Hardware, cutlery, and similar goods were not to pay more than 10 per cent.; cottons, woollens, muslins, lawns, cambrics, and most kinds of gauzes, not more than 12 per cent.; but silks, or articles partly silken, were prohibited as formerly. Linens were reciprocally to be charged at no higher rates than those levied on Dutch linens imported into Ireland, that is, at "the most favoured nation" rates. Sadlery, porcelain, pottery, and glass of all kinds, were to pay no more than 12 per cent. The highest impost retained was 30 per cent., levied on beer, perhaps because the interchange of that product was certain to be small. Countervailing duties might, however, be placed on certain articles. In the concluding forty articles of the treaty (one of the longest and most complex ever signed), the contracting Powers sought to lay down principles or regulations for the avoidance of disputes with respect to contraband and prohibited goods, smuggling, privateering, the suppression of piracy, and other subjects. They also left themselves free to revise the treaty at the end of twelve years. It is noteworthy that each of the contracting Powers affirmed the principle of seizing and confiscating the goods of the other Power when found on an enemy's merchantman, provided that they were embarked after the declaration of war.[1]

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[1] "F. O.," France, 20. For further details see my article in the "Eng Hist. Rev." for October 1908.

The treaty disappointed the hopes of some enthusiasts, who hoped that it might include some proviso for arbitration. Among these was William Pulteney, who, on 14th September, wrote to Pitt in terms that deserve to be remembered. After pointing out the futility of prohibitive edicts, he continued:

> It is to be considered whether this is not a good opportunity to ingraft upon this treaty some arrangement that may effectually tend to prevent future wars at least for a considerable time. Why may not two nations adopt, what individuals often adopt who have dealings that may lead to disputes, the measure of agreeing beforehand that in case any differences shall happen which they cannot settle amicably, the question shall be referred to arbitration. The matter in dispute is seldom of much real consequence, but the point of honour prevents either party from yielding, but if it is decided by third parties, each may be contented. The arbitrators should not be sovereign princes; but might not each nation name three judges, either of their own courts of law, or of any other country, out of whom the opposite nation should choose one, and these two hear the question and either determine it or name an umpire—the whole proceedings to be in writing? This would occasion the matter to be better discussed than is commonly done, and would give time for the parties to cool and most probably reconcile them to the decision, whatever it might be.
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> It has frequently occurred to my mind that, if France and England understood each other, the world might be kept in peace from one end of the globe to the other. And why may they not understand each other? I allow that France is the most intriguing nation upon earth; that they are restless and faithless; but is it impossible to show them that every object of their intrigue may be better assured by good faith and a proper intelligence with us, and might we not arrange everything together now so as completely to satisfy both? . . .[2]

Pitt, we may note, had sought to take a first step towards the limitation of armaments, by suggesting that the two Powers should lessen their squadrons in the East Indies; but to this Vergennes, on 1st April 1786, refused his assent.[1] Seeing, too, that France was pressing on the works at Cherbourg, and forming an East India Company on a great scale, Pitt naturally restricted his aims to the establishment of friendly commercial relations. The progress made in this respect was immense. Powers recently at war had never before signed a treaty containing provisions of so wide a scope, and so intimate a character; and lovers of peace hailed it as inaugurating a new era of goodwill. "People in general," wrote the Duke of Dorset, from London, to Mr. Eden, "are very much pleased with your treaty: the principal merchants in the City don't choose to give an opinion about it; anything, if novel, is apt to stupify merchants. . . . I never saw the King in such spirits: they rise in proportion to the stocks, which are beyond the sanguine expectations of everybody."[2] The rise in Consols gave the verdict of the City in unmistakable terms, and it was generally endorsed. On 20th November the Marquis of Buckingham wrote: "My accounts are that all manufacturers are run wild in speculation. Our wool has felt it already."[3] A few cranks like Lord George Gordon declaimed against Pitt for selling his country to the French, but the majority of thinking men, even in the Chamber of Manufacturers, thankfully accepted the treaty. A Glasgow manufacturer wrote to Eden that Great Britain, having the best wool, the best iron, the best clays for pottery, the best coal, and by far the best machinery in the world, would soon beat the French in their own market.[4] This was the general opinion. Those who held it said nothing, but set to work to regain in France herself the market of which she had deprived us in America. The state of Great Britain and of France in the year 1789 showed which were the more durable, the triumphs of war or of peace.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxvi, 233-54; "Auckland Corresp.," i, 495-515; Martens, "Traités," iv, 155-80.

[2] Pitt MSS., 169.

Nevertheless, there was some opposition in the House of Commons. Early in the session of 1787, Fox brought forward the question of the treaty and pressed for delay, so that the feeling of the country might be ascertained. To this Pitt demurred, on the ground that members had had ample time to consider the questions at issue, and that trade would suffer from the continuance of the present uncertainty. The arts which had undermined Pitt's compact with Ireland were now once more practised. Burke twitted the Prime Minister with looking on the affairs of two great nations in a counting-house spirit; and the Chamber of Manufacturers, in which opinions were divided, sought to frighten members by a petition setting forth "the serious and awful importance of the treaty . . . comprehending a prodigious change in the commercial system of this country."[1] This stage thunder was speedily divested of its terrors by Pitt pointing out that four months had elapsed since the signing of the treaty, and yet the Chamber of Manufacturers had remained silent until that day (12th February). After showing that neither our old ally, Portugal, nor our manufacturers had cause for alarm, Pitt raised the question to a high level in a passage which furnished a dignified retort both to the gibe of Burke, and to those who denounced trade with our traditional enemy: "To suppose," he said, "that any nation can be unalterably the enemy of another is weak and childish. It has its foundation neither in the experience of nations nor in the history of man. It is a libel on the constitution of political societies, and supposes the existence of diabolical malice in the original frame of man." Then, coming once more to practical considerations, he affirmed that, though the treaty was advantageous to France, it would be more so to us.[2]

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[1] "F. O.," France, 18.

[2] "Auckland Journals," i, 392, 6th October 1786.

[3] "Dropmore P.," i, 274.

[4] "Auckland Journals," i, 404.

In reply, Fox made one of the worst speeches of his career. He asserted twice over that France was the natural enemy of this land, owing to her overweening pride and boundless ambition; and that by means of the present treaty she sought to tie our hands and prevent us engaging in any alliances with foreign powers. Portugal, he said, was now made a sacrifice and peace-offering to France. The House refused to follow the vagaries of the Whig leader by 258 votes to 118; and the provisions of the treaty were passed in Committee by substantial majorities within a fortnight. The treaty passed the Lords on 6th March by 74 votes to 24.[3] In due course the treaty was ratified, and the ports on both sides of the Channel were opened to free commercial intercourse on 10th May 1787.

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[1] "Auckland Journals," i, 404; "Parl. Hist.," xxvi, 342-78.

[2] *Ibid.*, 392, 394.

[3] *Ibid.*, 397, 398, 402, 424, 595. Mr. J. L. le B. Hammond in his able work, "Charles James Fox" (1903), defends his hero on the ground that monarchical France was the enemy of England.

Pitt undoubtedly erred in proclaiming his conviction that the treaty was more advantageous to Great Britain than to France. He clinched his triumph in Parliament, but he imperilled the treaty; and it is noteworthy that he made that statement after Eden had warned him not to do so.[1] It was a weakness of which he was rarely guilty. The French negotiators had often pointed out that they were running a great risk of inflicting much harm on their industries. This was sober truth. Indeed, their general acquiescence in Pitt's requests has always been a puzzle; for the belief of Vergennes in Free Trade was not shared by the other Ministers, except perhaps by Calonne; and it was certain that the manufacturers of Rouen, Amiens, and Lille would cry out against the sudden change from prohibition to a 12 per cent. duty on textiles.

Daniel Hailes set himself to solve the riddle for the satisfaction of the ever distrustful Carmarthen, who, on 29th September 1786, wrote to him privately: "our suspicions of the good faith and friendly professions of France in political matters ought to be in exact proportion to the facility she may have evinced upon matters purely commercial." He further suggested that her aim was perhaps to sever our good relations with States with which we had political and commercial ties.[2] Hailes, doubtless taking his cue from his chief, thereupon sought to find out the motives which had influenced the French Ministry, and summed up his conclusions in a long report. It gives an interesting but somewhat jaundiced account of affairs in that very critical year 1786—the year of the Diamond Necklace scandal and of the decision to convoke the Chamber of Notables for the rectification of abuses too deep-seated for Louis XVI to uproot. The report is too long to quote here except in its most important passage; but we may glance at its salient features. Hailes pointed out that France suffered nearly as much as England from the late war, which left her with a National Debt almost exactly equal to that of her rival; also that the hopes of Frenchmen to gain the trade of the United States had been blighted. The Court of Versailles had, moreover, not exercised "the wise management of venality and the œconomy of corruption and favor" which would have satisfied most of the privileged classes. Its partiality was as notorious as its extravagance; and the failure of the old commercial prohibitive system, as also of the recent prohibitive *arrêts*, was probably due to the corruption prevalent in Court and official circles; for, to quote Hailes's words:

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[1] Pitt MSS., 110. Eden to Pitt, 13th April 1786.

[2] "F. O.," France, 18.

> Every one having credit enough with the great, or the mistresses of the great, to procure an exemption, would not have failed to apply for it in favour of some dependent or other. It seems therefore probable that the French Government felt its own inability to give effect to its prohibitory laws against the importation of British manufactures, and in that respect, at all events, they may be said to have been gainers by the treaty.
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> But I think I can take upon me to assure your Lordship that there exists another and no less principal cause of the eagerness of France to conclude the commercial arrangement. I mean that of the immediate relief of the *Trésor Royal* by the increase of the Revenue, an increase which, it may be presumed, will prove immense, from the sudden influx of all sorts of British merchandise paying the legal duties, as soon as the Treaty shall take effect. If this opinion should prove to be well grounded (and from the attention which I have paid to the late conduct of the Comptroller General [Calonne] I am much inclined to think it is) it will be a strong mark of the corruption of that Minister, who sacrifices to an immediate and temporary resource the dearest interests of his country.[1]

We need not lay much stress on the personal arguments here adduced; for Hailes may have been unduly influenced by the partisans of Necker or Breteuil, who were always at feud with Calonne. It is probable that Vergennes and Calonne were swayed by a deeper motive, namely, the desire to keep England quiet and friendly while they laid their schemes with a view to the ascendency of France in the Dutch affairs soon to be described, and thereafter to the combination of their efforts for the overthrow of British power in the East. Such an aim is consonant with the philosophic thoroughness of the character of Vergennes and the ambition of his showy colleague. Whether Pitt suspected some such design is uncertain; that Carmarthen did so can admit of no doubt.

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[1] "F. O.," France, 18. Hailes to Carmarthen, 25th October 1786. The Duke of Dorset thought very little of Hailes, but Hailes's despatches show far more knowledge of France than the Duke's.

Much, however, may be said for Hailes's views. It is generally admitted that the prodigal Calonne sacrificed very much in order to stand well with the Queen's party, and that his ardent desire was to put a good face on things at the time of the Assembly of the Notables early in 1787. There was every reason for his concern. The future of France depended on the docility of the Notables. If they were so far satisfied with the state of affairs as to pass the reforms desired by the King and Vergennes, the crisis which led up to the Revolution might have ended peacefully. Unjust taxation, constant deficits, and national bankruptcy were among the chief causes of the Revolution. Of course, Vergennes and Calonne could not foresee events; but they knew that the future was gloomy in the extreme unless the Notables induced the privileged classes to take up their fair share of the financial burdens. If Ministers were able to point to increased customs returns, the decline of smuggling, and the cementing of friendly relations with England, the Notables and the nobles at large might prove amenable to reason (for Anglomania was still the fashion); and all might yet go well. In these considerations probably lies the key to the conduct of the French Ministry in the later stages of the negotiation of 1786. With Vergennes the treaty was probably a matter of principle; to Calonne it was a device adopted in the course of that daring game of "neck or nothing," on which he staked the destinies of France. Though he was the chief sinner, Government and people alike behaved with incredible levity. Alvensleben, reporting on the situation at Versailles in November 1787, said: "Everything here is a matter of ceremony, clothes, varnish, phrases, national boasting, tinsel, intrigues; and everything is finally decided by forms."[1]

This scathing report was written after France had lost her one able statesman. Vergennes died shortly before the Notables assembled; and they, having to deal with an irresolute King and a political gamester, turned a deaf ear to counsels of Reform. Probably, too, they were influenced by the outcry against the commercial treaty, for it was general in all manufacturing centres, and did not pass away, as was the case in Great Britain. The Rouen Chamber of Commerce instituted an inquiry, the outcome of which was a report affirming the marked superiority of

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[1] Flammermont, *op. cit.*, 125.

British textile goods to those of France, and the impossibility of competing with them on the basis of the 12 per cent. duty. An able writer, Dupont de Nemours, gave an effective answer to the report; but, as generally happens in such cases, the defence attracted less attention than the attack.[1] We must further remember that merchants who lived under an oppressive system of taxation had every possible reason for "crying poor." Complaints against the commercial treaty were hurled at Arthur Young in every French manufacturing town which he visited in his tours of 1787 and 1788. Abbeville, Amiens, Lille, and Lyons declared against it in varying tones of anger or despair; the wine districts alone were loud in its praise.[2] Undoubtedly the French textile industries suffered severely for a time. The taste for English goods continued to depress home products, and that, too, despite the efforts of Marie Antoinette to set the fashion for the latter. In 1788 as many as 5,442 looms were idle in Lyons; but it is to be observed that this crisis was due either to the continued smuggling of English silk goods, to the preference for our fine cottons, or to the failure of the silk harvest in that year. The last cause was probably the most important.[3] The woollen and cotton trades alone could have been directly affected by the treaty. In them the conditions were undoubtedly bad in the years 1787, 1788. At Troyes 443 looms were not worked out of 2,600, and that proportion was usual throughout the east and north of France.

M. Levasseur, however, who has carefully investigated the causes of this crisis, attributes it largely to the utter prostration of public credit in France, and the issue of a coinage of doubtful value. The bad harvest of 1788, followed by a terribly cold winter, also intensified the distress. He concludes that, even so, the commercial treaty might ultimately have been advantageous to certain parts of the industrial economy of France; but it was applied suddenly in a time of political unsettlement and general distress.[4]

We must also remember that Calonne had for many months been squandering the resources of France. In accordance with his motto: "In order to establish public credit one must cultivate luxury," he had raised loan upon loan in time of peace, and it has been estimated that in the forty-one months of his term of office (1783-87) he borrowed 650,000,000 francs (£26,000,000).[1] No fiscal experiment can have a fair chance under such conditions; and it is therefore a violation of the laws of evidence to assert that the Commercial Treaty of 1786 was the chief cause of the French Revolution.

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[1] See summaries of both in Butenval, *op. cit.*, chs. xv, xvi.

[2] Arthur Young's "Travels in France" (Bohn edit., 1889), 8, 9, 69, 107, 284.

[3] Levasseur, "Hist. des Classes ouvrières," ii, 776.

[4] This is the judgement of R. Stourm, "Les Finances de l'Ancien Régime et de la Révolution," 59.

Summing up the facts concerning this most interesting treaty, we may conclude that the honour of originating it undoubtedly belongs firstly to Vergennes, secondly to Shelburne, and only in the third place to Pitt. It is clear that the French statesman worked steadily for it during the negotiations of 1783, and used all available means to bring it about even while Pitt showed no responsive desire. As has been shown above, the young Prime Minister had good reasons for not taking the matter up seriously until the autumn of 1785. Indeed it would have been a tactical mistake to press on the commercial compact with France until he had put forth every effort to unite Ireland with Great Britain by intimate trade relations. When those endeavours were frustrated by ignorance and faction, he turned towards France, but slowly and suspiciously. Not until the negotiation was far advanced did he show much eagerness on the subject. But it is the mark of a great Minister to keep a firm grasp upon colleagues and subordinates at all important points; and Pitt saw the futility of Carmarthen's prejudices no less than the possible danger of Eden's Gallophile enthusiasm.

The hostile actions of the French agents in Holland, to which we must soon recur, made him cautious on matters purely political; and, while pushing on the commercial treaty, which Carmarthen looked on as a trap, he took care to subject the ardent fancies of Eden to cold douches like the following: "Though in the commercial business I think there are reasons for believing the French may be sincere, I cannot listen without suspicion to their professions of political friendship."[2] As we shall see in the next chapters, Pitt generally treated with wholesome scepticism the alarmist news sent by Harris from The Hague. But the tidings from that quarter enabled Pitt to assess at their due value the philanthropic professions of the *salons* of

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[1] "Cambridge Mod. Hist.," viii, 74.

[2] "Auckland Journals," i, 127. Pitt to Eden, 10th June 1786.

Paris. Not that he was indifferent to the golden hopes of that age. After the treaty was signed he gave expression to his hopes in words pulsating with a noble enthusiasm; but, while it was under discussion, he showed the balance of mind and keenness in bargaining which characterize a great statesman. We may also remark here that Pitt sought earnestly to bring about a favourable commercial treaty with Spain and Russia, but failed. The Czarina showed her hostility by granting to France a treaty on the basis of the most favoured nation.[1]

Finally, we may hazard the conjecture that, if the finances of France had received from the Court of Versailles and Calonne a tithe of the fostering care which Pitt bestowed on those of Great Britain, both countries would have profited equally from the free commercial and social intercourse inaugurated by this memorable compact. As it was, France slid fast down the slope that led to the chasm of Revolution; and in the midst of that catastrophe Robespierre and his followers, who represented the prejudices of the northern manufacturing towns, spread abroad the spiteful falsehood that Pitt's commercial policy had ever been aimed at the financial ruin of the French nation.

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[1] Martens, "Traites," iv, 196-223. For these negotiations with Spain and Russia, see Salomon's "Pitt," 237-44. A little later Pitt started commercial negotiations with Prussia and Holland, but nothing came of them. It is clear, however, that he sought to revise the whole of our commercial relations.

CHAPTER XV

THE DUTCH CRISIS

(1786, 1787)

If we lose the Netherlands, France will acquire what she has always considered as the climax of her power.—SIR JAMES HARRIS, 1st May, 1787.

His Majesty wishes only the preservation of the independence and true constitution of the [Dutch] Republic.—THE MARQUIS OF CARMARTHEN, 29th June, 1787 (B. M. Add. MSS., 35539).

WE have interrupted our survey of Pitt's foreign policy in order to present a connected account of that interesting episode, the commercial treaty with France. But this event took place in a year which witnessed the growth of a crisis so serious as to threaten ruin to that constructive effort. The crisis arose from the sharp conflict of interests between Great Britain and France in Dutch affairs, as described in Chapter XIII. As no adequate account has yet appeared in English on this question, I propose to treat it on a scale proportionate to its importance.

The reader will remember that the feuds between the Patriots, abetted by France and the Stadholder's party, had already aroused keen interest at London and Paris; that our able envoy, Harris, had bravely waged an unequal campaign for the Prince and Princess of Orange—unequal, because Pitt persistently forbade him to commit this country to the defence of their cause, though sentiment and policy linked it to that of England. Further, the general situation of the Powers then seemed irretrievably to doom the Prince's fortunes. Frederick the Great, in his desire to keep on good terms with France, refused to help his niece, Wilhelmina, Princess of Orange. Austria was allied with France, and Russia with Austria. Finally, neither Pitt nor the Marquis of Carmarthen deemed it possible to frame an alliance with Prussia; and all the advances which they made to the Czarina, Catharine II, and the Emperor Joseph II, were coldly repelled. In fact, no Power cared for an alliance with England. The conclusion of the Franco-Dutch alliance of November 1785 seemed to close all doors against her. When the fortunes of a State have been on the decline, it is very hard to stop the downward movement. That was the position of Great Britain early in the year 1786.

The only sources of hope seemed to be in the imminence of the death of Frederick and in the outrageous actions of the Dutch Patriots. Their violent support of provincial rights and hatred of the Stadholder and his mildly centralizing policy were carried to strange lengths. The Estates of Holland decreed that no Orange songs were to be sung, and no Orange colours worn. Harris relates that a woman came near to be hanged for the latter offence. Even the vendor of carrots was suspect unless he left the roots in a protective coating of soil. To a home-loving people like the Dutch these pedantries became ever more hateful. The bovine character of the Stadholder was to some extent a safeguard; for who could reasonably claim that his colossal powers of inaction would ever be a danger to the Republic? It is fairly certain that he had the allegiance of the rural population everywhere, even in the Province of Holland; but the populace of the large towns was overwhelmingly on the side of the Patriots; and the Estates of Holland (a province which contained more than half the population, and more than half the wealth, of the whole Union) decidedly opposed him.[1] Of the smaller provinces, Guelderland, Zealand, and Friesland supported the Stadholder. Utrecht was torn with schism on this subject, the rural districts cleaving to him, while the city of Utrecht broke away, and defied his authority. As Pitt forbade Harris to take any step which would commit England to the defence of the Stadholder, that envoy continued to play an apparently hopeless game. But his skill, resource, his commanding personality, and occasional bribes, enabled him to continue the struggle, even in democratic Holland. His great difficulty was that France in April 1786 had let it be known that she would allow no other Power to interfere in Dutch affairs, and would forcibly oppose any such attempt. To strive against the Patriots while they had a ground of confidence utterly denied to their opponents, was to condemn Harris to struggle against great odds, and never has an unequal fight been more gallantly fought. The worst symptom was the rise of bodies of armed burghers, styled Free Corps, which soon attained considerable strength. Encouraged by success, the Patriots sought to depose William V outright, and proclaimed the Princess Regent during the minority of her son. She rejected this scheme with indignation. Failing here, they struck at the authority of the Prince by procuring from the Estates of Holland his deposition from the command of the regular troops of that province. This blow could not be parried; and it dealt consternation among the loyalists.

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[1] The contributions of the Provinces to the needs of the Union show their respective resources. Out of every 100 florins of federal revenue, Holland contributed 57¾, Friesland 11½, Zealand 9, Groningen 5¾, Utrecht 5¾, Guelderland 5½, Overyssel 3½, Drent 1.

There was no hope of help from Frederick the Great. For the reasons previously stated he had hardened his heart against all the appeals that came from the Princess of Orange; and she finally rejected with scorn his advice that she should come to terms with the Patriots and France. On 16th May 1786 Harris summed up the relations of Prussia to France and Holland in this sprightly way:

"Prussia says to France 'Do what you please in Holland, but leave at least the appearance of a Stadholderian Government.'—France replies—'We shall lose the confidence and support of the Patriots and with it our whole influence in the Republic if we mention the word "Stadholder"; take from us the odium of the measure by declaring you cannot see him deposed. We then may, without displeasing our friends, espouse his cause to a certain degree, and we shall both be satisfied.'"[1]

While the welter was ever increasing in this once prosperous land, there came a gleam of hope from the East. On 17th August 1786 Frederick the Great was gathered to his fathers, and his nephew Frederick William II reigned in his stead. As Prince Royal he had spoken warmly of his resolve to right the wrongs of his sister, the Princess of Orange; but as King he disappointed her hopes. His character was despicable. Extravagance and dissipation were accountable for private debts amounting to one million sterling at the time of his accession and soon after to three-quarters of a million more.[1] But his irresolution was of more serious consequence. A vicious man may excel as a ruler; an unstable man, never. Frederick William had scarcely a feature in common with the masterful race of the Hohenzollerns. The contrast between him and his uncle was startling. In place of that silent, cynical, and dogged ruler, Berlin and Sans-Souci rejoiced in a handsome, affable monarch, who seemed made to win the hearts of all at first sight and to lose them on closer acquaintance. For it was found that with him work and policy depended on whims and moods. Swaying to and fro between energy and sloth, violence and timidity, he disconcerted his Ministers, until they came to see that the King's resolves were as fleeting as his feelings. After the first flush of activity wore away, languor pervaded every bureau of that centralized autocracy. On 6th January 1787 Lord Dalrymple, our ambassador at Berlin, wrote of the King: "in general he appears very indifferent about what is passing"; and he further reported that he urgently desired to "get rid of so irksome an affair" as his sister's troubles, and looked on the Prince of Orange as the chief cause of the dissensions in the Dutch Netherlands.[2] Another of our envoys, with more wit than is usually found in semi-official letters, summed up the difference between Frederick the Great and Frederick William II by saying that the former had the wisdom of Solomon, but the latter resembled that potentate only in respect of his overflowing harem. Mirabeau's opinion on the imminent downfall of the Prussian State is too well known to need quoting here.

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[1] For details see Luckwaldt, *op. cit.* On a similar plan, Harris had written to Carmarthen on 3rd January 1786 that the idea of France keeping the Stadholder in his position and England then aiding him is so monstrous that Frederick "must think us mere novices in politicks" (B.M. Add. MSS., 28061).

Yet the nonchalance of Frederick William in foreign affairs is not wholly indefensible. Confronted by the alliance of those scheming and unscrupulous rulers, Catharine II and Joseph II, he could effect little until he had the friendship of one at least of the Great Powers; but France was pledged to Austria, and England was still averse from a Prussian alliance. On 20th October 1786 Dalrymple thus summed up his arguments against a compact with the Court of Berlin: "We might indeed form a temporary co-operation with Prussia for some particular purposes, as at present in the case of Holland, where little or no opposition is to be expected from the two Imperial Courts; but to enter into a general and permanent system with Prussia alone, without the concurrence of other Powers, would be a measure, in my apprehension, perfectly frantic, and only to be justified by a combination similar to that in 1756 being formed against us." Four days later, after an interview with Hertzberg, Dalrymple wrote that a Northern League between us and the Baltic Powers was out of the question during the lifetime of the Czarina, seeing that Turkish schemes stood first in her thoughts, and these implied alliance with Joseph.[1] As will shortly appear, the knowledge which the Turks had of these schemes was to lead to the Eastern War of 1787, which ended the suspense besetting Prussia and England.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 28061 and 28062. Dalrymple to Carmarthen, 20th October 1786, 23rd January 1787.

[2] "F. O.," Prussia, 11. So Luckwaldt, *op. cit.*, 52-7.

For the present the isolation of these States left them in a most precarious position. The utmost they could hope for was to struggle on, waiting for a turn of Fortune's wheel in their favour. The first aim of the Court of Berlin was to thwart the Austrian scheme for exchanging the Belgic provinces for Bavaria. Joseph II still pursued this phantom, though he had his hands full in Brabant, where philosophism had again stirred up revolt, and his alliance with Catharine portended war with the resentful Turks. Frederick William believed, and perhaps rightly, that so long as the Austro-Russian alliance held good, Prussia could take no step Rhinewards. He therefore saw in the entreaties of his sister only a scheme to draw him into fatal courses; and when the entreaties became reproaches his answers became few and cold.[2]

Unfortunately, too, the influence of the veteran diplomatist, Hertzberg, was waning, because of an austere and somewhat superior manner which the young King resented. That Minister favoured a close understanding with England with a view to joint action at The Hague; but there was associated with him at the Foreign Ministry a colleague, Count Finckenstein, who strongly inclined towards France, thwarted Hertzberg's efforts, and prejudiced the King against an English alliance.[3] To add to the perplexities of the time, Thulemeyer, the Prussian envoy at The Hague, supported France; and Harris suspected him, perhaps rightly, of having been bought over by the Patriots and their paymasters. He certainly thwarted the efforts of Görtz, a special envoy sent from Berlin to The Hague; and finally the Princess of Orange begged her brother, seeing that he would not help her, at least not to allow Thulemeyer to act in concert with De Verac, the French envoy at The Hague.[1] Early in May she sent a request for a loan of Prussian cannon in order to withstand the growing forces of the Patriots, but met with a refusal.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 28061. See, too, "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 212, for Carmarthen's view. "I never desire a connexion with Prussia unless Russia, and of course, Denmark, are included."

[2] All the despatches of this time serve to refute the statement of Lecky (v, 80) that the accession of Frederick William "greatly changed the situation" for the Princess of Orange.

[3] Wittichen, *op. cit.*, 63-5

Matters, however, now took a turn for the better for that unfortunate Princess. Latterly the Court of Berlin had sought to arrange with that of Versailles a plan of joint intervention so as to end the strifes in the United Provinces in a way not too derogatory to the Prince of Orange. But this proposal was accompanied by conditions which were at once very tartly rejected by the Court of Versailles. This refusal of a friendly overture was to have far-reaching results, for the irritation of the Prussian monarch now led him to favour the idea of intervention in Holland.

This brief survey will have enabled us to understand the gradual development of Pitt's policy from strict neutrality to tentative and cautious activity. The change of attitude will be found to correspond closely with a change in Continental affairs which enabled him with little risk to raise his country once more to her rightful position.

It is the mark of a great statesman to keep his gaze on all the chief matters of public interest, to weigh their importance, and to make his policy the resultant, as it were, of the leading forces and best tendencies of his age. No one who has not a clear vision and ripe judgement can give such an assessment and act on it with tact and firmness. Small minds are certain to be diverted towards side issues and hastily to take up questions which are unripe for solution. From these faults Pitt's singular maturity of mind and steadiness of purpose kept him free. He saw that the greatest of British interests was peace; and, despite the pressing claims of Harris at The Hague, he refused to be drawn blindfold into the irritating and obscure questions there at stake. True, it was important to keep the United Provinces from becoming dependent on France; but he believed that the efforts of the Patriots in that direction might be curbed by means of diplomacy. No statesman prefers a warlike to a peaceful solution unless all the resources of his own craft have been exhausted, least of all could the champion of economy, who naturally discounted the clamorous appeals of Harris for help.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 11. Dalrymple to Carmarthen, 21st April 1787.

There were reasons why our envoy should urge Pitt to adopt a more forward policy. In the autumn of 1786 the fortunes of the Stadholder steadily declined, and the raids of the Patriots on his prerogatives became more daring and successful. In September, as we saw, he was deprived of the command of the regular forces in the Province of Holland. His opponents, the Patriots, next strengthened their Free Corps, drew a cordon of troops along the frontiers of Holland, and overthrew his authority in the hitherto loyal provinces, Overyssel and Groningen. The city of Utrecht also defied him and elected Estates, while those of the still loyal Province of Utrecht assembled at Amersfoort. Other towns, even in the loyal provinces, seemed likely to follow the example of Utrecht. In face of these facts the appeals of Harris for help became more urgent than ever. On 24th October he wrote privately to Carmarthen: "As we are afraid to threaten, we must either bribe or give up the game."[1] But, realizing more and more that the obstacle to his forward policy lay in the peaceful resolves of Pitt, he wrote directly to him on 28th November, pointing out that France was making amazing strides everywhere at our expense, that she was on the point of gaining complete control over the United Provinces, and he hinted that that accession to her naval strength and to her resources in the East Indies would enable her soon to attack England in overwhelming strength.

Much could be said in favour of this view. The activity of France in the East, as we saw in the last chapter, had been very threatening, and it is clear that the schemes of St. Priest and other French agents in Egypt pointed out the path on which Bonaparte set forth with heroic stride thirteen years later. Dreams of a French Empire in the East haunted many minds at Paris in 1786. On 7th September, shortly before the signature of the Anglo-French commercial treaty, Hailes, Secretary of

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS, 28060.

Legation at Paris, reported that the French Government seemed to be preparing for "the entire subversion" of British power in India; and he cynically added that when the time for action came, "then, as formerly, the rights of mankind will be held out as the pretext."[1] Even Eden sent word that there was talk of a design that France should gain control over all the Dutch ports in the East Indies.[2] When we remember that the Cape of Good Hope was a Dutch possession, and that the British lands in India were scattered and weak, we can appreciate the gravity of the crisis.

The surmises of Hailes and Eden were correct. There was a powerful party at the French Court which worked in alliance with the Dutch Patriots for the control of the East Indies. They saw their opportunity in the bankruptcy then threatening the Dutch East India Company; and in the winter of 1786 the Patriot leader, the Rhinegrave of Salm, sent to the Cabinet of Versailles a plan of a Franco-Dutch alliance with a view to the overthrow of the British power in India. Thanks to the pacific views of Louis XVI and Vergennes, nothing came of the scheme; but the Patriots then changed front and offered to hand over to France the important naval station, Trincomalee, in the north-east of Ceylon, to serve as a place of arms for France in case of war. This plan had a favourable reception at Versailles, some of the Ministers urging that 18,000 troops should be sent out under the command of General de Bouillé. This soldier (the hero of Carlyle's stirring account of the Mutiny of Nancy in 1790) states in his Memoirs[3] that he remained some time at Paris in hopes of receiving the order for the conquest of the British settlements in India; but he remained in vain; for the French Cabinet *found no opportunity for going to war.* The events now to be described will explain the sorry ending to these golden hopes; and the reader will bear in mind that the struggle of the rival Powers for ascendancy in Holland concerned the fate of Britain's Indian Empire no less than her position in Europe.[4]

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[1] "F. O.," France, 18. [2] Pitt MSS., 110. [3] Bouillé, "Mems.," ch. i.

[4] Grenville during his mission to The Hague in August 1787 got an inkling of the wider scheme described above, as appears in his phrase "One's mind at once runs to Trincomale." So late as August 1788 Pitt was nervous about the fate of that port. See his letter to Grenville as to the rumour of 800 French troops sailing thither ("Dropmore P.," ii, 280, 353).

All the more astonishing, then, is the calmness of Pitt's reply to Harris of 5th December 1786. In it he directed him to do all in his power to keep together the Orange party, so that it might "act with advantage, both for their own country and for us, on some future day, if it should arrive." For the present, however, that party must "lie by," and avoid pushing things to an extremity which would commit both themselves and England.[1]

This cautious policy was perhaps in some measure due to the King, who strongly opposed a forward policy in the Netherlands. His chief preoccupation in the years 1786, 1787, was the extravagance of the Prince of Wales and the rapidly increasing expense of his own family, to which he refers in pathetic terms. The news of the activity of Sir James Harris at The Hague "much affected" him; and when, on 7th January 1787, Lord Carmarthen wrote to Windsor in order to suggest a more energetic policy in the Netherlands, a sharp retort came, bidding that Minister remember "the disgraceful conduct" of England in the late war, and asserting that he (George III) refused to act as the *Draw-can-sir* of Europe.[2]

From the tenour of the King's letter to Pitt on 8th January we may infer that Carmarthen had kept his overture to Windsor secret; and Pitt, on hearing of it from the King, must have felt piqued at his colleague's action. Already they were on strained terms owing to Pitt having insisted on Carmarthen's presence at Court, despite indisposition, in order to present the Portuguese envoy; and a chief who demanded so strict an observance of etiquette was certain to resent any private attempt of his Foreign Minister to influence the King's opinions on a far weightier question. There is an apologetic tone in Carmarthen's hitherto unpublished letter of 8th January to Pitt. The first sentences refer to his ill health, and are omitted:

Hendon, Jan. 8, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I wish to lay before you *in confidence* my letter to the King of yesterday, together with His Majesty's answer of this morning's date, which I am free to confess to you has occasioned me a considerable degree of uneasiness. . . . You will, I am sure, do me the justice to remark the manner in which I have stated my opinion to the King and I have always understood your sentiments to be precisely the same in regard to the *object*, though perhaps more cautious (from prudential and well founded motives) in the means to be employed. I am free to own that, eager as I am for preventing France acquiring the absolute command of Holland, I have always thought we might succeed by means of private negotiation and intrigue. The experiment of trying to combat her with her own weapons would have some merit; and, convinced as I am that she has reckoned all along upon England not interfering, I think the present moment must not be passed by without our endeavouring to make the most we can of the Provinces which are opposed to Holland, and of the present firmness of the Prince and Princess of Orange. *L'Assemblée des Notables* is I think some security for the pacific disposition of France, or rather for her inability of indulging any of a contrary nature at present. I should hope we might have a meeting on Thursday for the Dutch business.[1]

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 251-5.

[2] *Ibid.*, 267, 268; "Leeds Memoranda," 117.

The differences between Pitt and Carmarthen were greater than are here represented; and the joint influence of the King and Pitt prevented the adoption of the more spirited measures towards which he inclined. This was gall and wormwood to Harris. That able envoy, looking on helplessly at the brilliant diplomatic successes of France, failed to see the canker which was eating at her heart. The Assembly of the Notables was "the beginning of the end." It implied the inability of the absolute monarchy to carry the urgently needed reforms or to meet the ordinary expenses of the State. Pitt saw this. Further, while Harris admitted that he regarded France as "a natural enemy," Pitt looked on her as a possible friend. On the Dutch Question alone was there keen rivalry between the two States; and, in view of the growing financial difficulties of France, delay was more than ever advisable; for her efforts abroad must slacken as her vitality lessened under the load of debt that Calonne was gaily heaping up. In the meantime, until the Prussian monarch had the will, and England had the power, to intervene, Harris must continue his Sisyphus toil, and the Prince and Princess must suffer further indignities. Such was Pitt's policy. To our envoy it seemed unbearably mean; but it won in the end, and all the more surely for the delay. A Minister at the centre can often see things in truer perspective than an ambassador who is, after all, only at one point on the circumference.

Harris continued stoutly to roll the stone uphill. He helped to form an Association of the Provinces, towns and persons opposed to any change in the constitution; and, as the Stadholder in the early part of 1787 showed far more spirit and tact, the Patriots found it by no means easy to push the stone backwards. Harris declared on 20th April 1787 that the popular indignation ran strongly against the Patriots, who had not one-twentieth of the people on their side. This is incredible; but it is quite certain that his activity and the less determined policy of Montmorin, the successor of Vergennes at Versailles, put new heart into the Stadholder's party. Nevertheless, the Patriots carried the day at Amsterdam by sheer audacity, and compelled the Regents, or magistrates, to dismiss nine of their number. This act of violence, together with the increasing activity of William V and the signs of wavering at Versailles, led Harris to request an interview with Ministers at Whitehall.[1] He also bore a letter of the Princess to George III, which met with no favourable response.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 151.

A Cabinet meeting was held on 23rd May 1787, at which Harris was present, and submitted his opinions to a full discussion. Ministers met at Thurlow's house for dinner; and he in due course launched forth on the troubled sea of Dutch politics, stating at great length the arguments against intervention, then tearing them to pieces, and declaring even for war with France, if the need arose. Richmond, Master of the Ordnance, called for maps, discussed the military situation, and urged the need of speedy preparations. Pitt then admitted the immense importance of preserving the independence of Holland, and of facing war as a possible, but not probable, alternative; then, turning to Harris, he pressed him to say which course involved the greater risk, that of opposing France at once before she entirely dominated the Dutch Netherlands, or that of awaiting the issue of her present efforts. He also asked what kind of help the Orange party most needed. In reply to this and to similar questions from Thurlow, Harris urged that money should be supplied, especially to the Province of Guelderland; he declared that the supporters of the constitution would probably be overborne if they were not helped by England; that France was not in such a condition as to go to war in order to conquer Holland, but that when she had the upper hand there she probably would throw down the gauntlet. Stafford then declared in favour of intervention. Nevertheless, Pitt held firmly to his conviction, that no case was yet made out for a course of conduct which might possibly lead to war and so blight the budding prosperity of Great Britain. Carmarthen and Sydney did not speak. We may plausibly conjecture that the silence of the Foreign Minister betokened his disapproval of Pitt's views and his inability to controvert them.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 299. "I am certain if we begin to roar, France will shrink before us" (Harris to Carmarthen, 5th May). See, too, Wittichen, 67.

So far as we can judge, Pitt alone was for complete neutrality. Nevertheless, his view prevailed. An interview which Harris had with him on the morrow did not change his sentiments; but, on 26th May, the Cabinet agreed to allow our envoy the sum of £20,000 so as to enable the loyal provinces to take into their pay the troops which had been disbanded by, or had deserted from, the forces of the Province of Holland.[1] On 10th June the further sum of £70,000 was advanced.[2]

Pitt's resolve was doubtless based on the difficulty of gaining an ally, for, as we have seen, the King of Prussia had recently refused the request of his sister for a loan of cannon and was proposing to concert plans with France for a joint mediation in Dutch affairs.[3] How was it possible for England alone to interfere for the Prince and Princess of Orange while their natural protector was making advances to their enemy? So little hope was there at present of aid from Prussia that on 12th June Carmarthen expressed to Harris his belief that the Orange party would get more help from the Emperor Joseph than from Frederick William. The torpor of that party was another depressing symptom. Time after time Carmarthen informed Harris that if the Prince's supporters desired help, they must bestir themselves: they had as yet the majority of the regular army and of the States-General on their side; and a fit use of this strength would save the situation.

Despite the efforts of Harris, the Patriots continued to gain ground. At the end of May their partisans wrecked the houses of the Prince's friends at Amsterdam, and crushed the reaction in his favour which had gathered head.[4] On 15th June the States-General decided, on the casting vote of the President, to admit the deputies sent by the illegal Estates of the city of Utrecht. This gave a bare majority to the Patriots, who then proceeded to deprive the Stadholder of the right to order the march of troops or the distribution of stores in the provinces outside Holland. Four days later, however, Harris was able to procure the rejection of this decree as illegal; and it was further decided that the Estates of Utrecht meeting at Amersfoort were the legal Estates of that province and could alone send deputies. Of course this change of front has been ascribed to English gold, and certainly it was due to Harris. This rebuff to the Patriots and the coyness of the French Court to their urgent demands for help may have led to the formation of a resolve which was to end the balancings of statesmen and the even pulls of parties. The solution of the Dutch problem was, in the first instance, due to a woman's wit.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 303-6.

[2] "F. O.," Holland, 14.

[3] "F. O.," Prussia, 11. Ewart to Carmarthen, 19th and 22nd May 1787.

[4] "F. O.," Holland, 14. Harris to Carmarthen, 1st June.

About the middle of the month of June 1787, the Princess of Orange framed a plan for leaving her city of refuge, Nymeguen, and proceeding to The Hague with the aim of inspiring her crestfallen partisans. Hitherto the Orange party had shown the torpor which is the outcome of poor leadership. Of the Prince of Orange it might have been said, as it was said of Louis XVI, that he cooled his friends and heated his foes; but his consort had the fire and energy which he lacked. Harris once confessed that her frank, blue eyes could be "dangerous"; and in many ways her presence promised to breathe new life into her party.

As the journey to The Hague would involve some risk of insult from the Free Corps which formed a cordon on the frontier of the Province of Holland, she proceeded first to Amersfoort, where her consort was holding together his partisans in the Province of Utrecht, in order to gain his consent to this daring step. Thereafter she warned Harris and her chief friends at The Hague of her resolve, and asked their sanction, adding that the magnitude of the object at stake impelled her to run some measure of personal risk in order to compass it. Harris saw objections to the plan, but yielded to the representations of the Dutchmen. He, however, stated to Carmarthen his doubts whether she could make her way through the bodies of armed burghers, and asked his chief for instructions as to his course of action in case any violence were offered to Her Royal Highness.[1]

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 322.

His apprehensions were in part to be realized. The princess set out from Nymeguen on 28th June with the ordinary retinue. While seeking to enter the Province of Holland near Schoonhoven, she was stopped by a lieutenant commanding a body of Free Corps, who refused to allow her to proceed; his action was endorsed by the authorities; and she was obliged, though without much personal indignity, to put up at the nearest house where the lieutenant kept her and her ladies-in-waiting under close and embarrassing surveillance, until she consented that the question of her journey should be decided by the Estates of Holland. Then she was allowed to return to Schoonhoven, where she indited letters to the Grand Pensionary and others, declaring that her sole aim was to promote a reconciliation. The Estates of Holland refused to allow her to proceed, and she had finally to return to Nymeguen. This insult to royalty sent a thrill of indignation through every Court but that of Versailles.

Before describing the political results of the incident, we may pause to ask whether the plan of the Princess's journey was the outcome of the fertile brain of Harris. That was the insinuation of the French Foreign Minister, Montmorin, and it has often been repeated.[1] The charge has never been proven; and the following reasons may be urged against it. Harris certainly hoped to profit by her presence at The Hague, but obviously he doubted the possibility of her entering the province. Further, on 29th June, when he heard of her detention, he wrote to Carmarthen: "The event which has happened oversets our whole plan. Check to the queen, and in a move or two checkmate is, I fear, the state of our game." Not yet did he see that the check might be worth a Prussian army to the Orange party. All he saw was the present discouragement of that party, and the timidity of the States-General of the United Provinces, who now refused to censure the outrage. Carmarthen saw more clearly. "Don't be so disheartened by a check to the queen," he replied. "Cover her by the knight and all 's safe. . . . If the King, her brother, is not the dirtiest and shabbiest of Kings, he must resent it."[2]

But had the Princess throughout laid her plans with a view to such an event? In this connection it is significant that Frederick

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[1] "Auckland Journals," i, 521; Oscar Browning, "The Flight to Varennes and other Essays," 163.

[2] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 329.

William of Prussia had latterly shown great irritation against the Court of Versailles owing to its summary rejection of his offer of a joint mediation in the Dutch troubles. Montmorin curtly declined every one of the preliminary terms which Hertzberg had succeeded in appending to that proposal. He also blamed the Stadholder for all the ferment, and stated that, if the Prussian monarch intervened in favour of the Orange party, he would "only compromise himself to his entire loss."[1] This nagging reply to a friendly overture cut the sensitive monarch to the quick; he sent a spirited remonstrance, declaimed against the bad faith of the French Government, and stated that he meant now to complete his own plans in Holland, that he hoped to have the support of England, and might draw the sword sooner than was expected.[2] Ewart expected little result from all this; but he was mistaken. Frederick William was a man of sentiment; and the appeal which now came from Holland was one that stirred his being to its depths.

The Princess, on hearing of his resentment against France, seems to have devised a course of action which would be likely to make this mood lasting. Harris reported on 29th June that on the day before, "in consequence of a courier from Berlin, the Princess of Orange, a few hours after he arrived, left Nymeguen and set out for Amersfoort. She had time to write to nobody, and the cause of this sudden departure is not to be guessed at."[3] The short journey to Amersfoort was for the purpose described above. That the Princess was acting in close concert with her brother, and that Harris knew nothing as to the motives of her conduct further appear in statements which (strange to say) are omitted from his despatch of 25th June, printed in the "Diaries." He informed Carmarthen that she was sending a courier to Berlin, and that the present plan "completely does away all the ideas which have been very prevalent here for these three or four days, that His Prussian Majesty was so irritated at the late answer from France as to be decided to assist the Prince of Orange with men and money." Obviously the guile of Sir James Harris was of the diplomatic, not of the feminine, kind. Further, the fact that the Princess travelled with a retinue made it almost certain that she would be stopped by the cordon of Free Corps on the frontier of Holland. If her chief aim had been to arrive at The Hague, she would have gone in disguise; for only so could she hope to pass through the troops. Her chief aim surely was to be stopped; and the more contumeliously, the better for her purpose.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 11. Ewart to Carmarthen, 6th June 1787. Ewart was now *chargé d'affaires* at Berlin, Dalrymple having gone home on furlough. He did not return, and Ewart became ambassador in August 1788.

[2] *Ibid.* Ewart's note of 30th June.

[3] "F. O.," Holland, 15.

Her letters written after the incident show that she desired to reap the full advantage from it. On 6th July Harris reported her expectation that, if England proposed to Prussia a plan for rescuing the Republic from France, it would be well received at Berlin; and that she grounded her confidence in the reports of those who knew the King of Prussia well. Ewart also on 10th July stated that she had written to Berlin in terms implying that the honour of the King was at stake fully as much as her own.[1] With these proofs of the discouragement of Harris, and of the keen insight of the Princess before us, may we not infer that she deliberately chose to submit herself to an insult from the Patriots in order to clinch a resolve which she knew to be forming in her brother's mind? His anger against France might then be fanned to a flame of resentment fed by injured family pride.

Fortunately for her purpose, the Estates of Holland waived aside the demand of the King of Prussia for immediate and complete satisfaction for the insult; and Frederick William vowed that he would exact vengeance at the sword's point. Hertzberg now saw within his reach the great aims which Ewart and he had so long pursued, an Anglo-Prussian compact which might ripen into alliance. But it was a task of much difficulty to stiffen that monarch's wavering impulses. Hertzberg rightly saw that English influence should not at first be pushed;[2] and only when the King's resentment at the insult began to cool, were the wider questions of the future discreetly opened to his gaze. Here again the situation was complicated; for Finckenstein worked on his fears of an attack from Austria, if he intervened in Holland; and Thulemeyer, the Prussian envoy at The Hague, darkened the royal counsels by sending an official warning that Prussia must expect no help from England, even if France struck at the Prussian expeditionary corps. Ewart, however, was able to show that this report closely resembled an earlier one from the same source. The only result, then, was to discredit Thulemeyer and pave the way for his disgrace. When further friendly assurances came from the Pitt Ministry, Frederick William gave orders for the mustering of 25,000 troops at his fortress of Wesel on the lower Rhine. Even now he was afflicted by the irresolution which for so many years was to paralyze the power of his kingdom; and it is doubtful whether he would have acted at all but for the initiative now taken by the Prime Minister of England.[1]

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[1] "F. O.," Holland, 15; "F. O.," Prussia, 11.

[2] Luckwaldt, *op. cit.*, 66, 67.

Pitt's change of attitude at this time is the decisive event of the situation. At once, on hearing the news of the insult to the Princess of Orange, he saw that the time for action had come. In a personal interview with Count Lusi, Prussian ambassador at London, he pointed out that this was a matter which solely concerned the Prussian monarch, and in which France had no right to interfere.[2] George III spoke in the same terms to Lusi at a *levée*. Further, on the receipt of Ewart's despatch of 7th July, reporting that Pitt had declared against any intervention whatever by Great Britain, Carmarthen sent a sharp denial, and stated that diplomatic support would have been offered earlier to Prussia in Dutch affairs, but for the strange conduct of Thulemeyer at The Hague. If that conduct did not represent the wishes of the Prussian Government, His Majesty "will be extremely ready to enter into a most confidential communication with His Prussian Majesty" on the means of preserving the independence of the Dutch Republic and the rights of the Stadholder. Carmarthen added the important information that Montmorin had declared that France would not thwart the Prussian monarch's resolve to gain reparation for the insult. That question he declared to be totally distinct from an interference in the domestic affairs of the Republic, which might be settled amicably by a joint mediation of the Powers most concerned in them, namely, the Emperor, Great Britain, Prussia, and France. The draft of this important despatch closed with this sentence, in Pitt's handwriting: "Could such a good understanding be agreed on, there can be little doubt that the affairs of Holland would be settled in an amicable way, to the satisfaction of all those who are interested in the welfare of the Republic."[3]

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[1] Wittichen (78, 79) holds that Frederick William's hesitation came from concern about the Fürstenbund or the hope that France would join in a peaceful mediation in Holland.

[2] Lusi's report of 17th July 1787. Luckwaldt, *op. cit.*, 68.

[3] "F. O.," Prussia, 11. Carmarthen to Ewart, 17th July. There is nothing in

It is clear, then, that Pitt meant to encourage Prussia to energetic action, in case the Estates of Holland did not grant full reparation for the insult; but he looked on that step merely as preliminary to the others which would solve the whole question by a peaceful mediation of the four Powers above named. On learning that the Emperor had expressed his friendly interest in the Prince of Orange and his approval of Prussia's conduct, the Foreign Office sent off a despatch to Keith, British Ambassador at Vienna, bidding him to urge his active co-operation "and to make it, if possible, the means of establishing a cordial and confidential correspondence with that Court in future."[1] Joseph II did not respond to this friendly proposal, probably because of troubles lowering in the East. But the incident proves the reluctance of our Foreign Office to act with Prussia alone, and also its hopes of a peaceful mediation in Dutch affairs. According to news received from Paris, France did not seem likely to oppose Prussia's action, and even favoured the scheme of a joint mediation of the three Powers, which were then on cordial terms.[2]

In spite of the friendly assurances that came from London, and the manly advice of Hertzberg, Frederick William continued to vacillate in his usual manner. As we have seen, he had recently coquetted with the notion of a mediation conjointly with France alone; but, despite its curt rejection by the Court of Versailles, he now recurred to a similar scheme.[3] If France had played her cards well, she might even then have won the day at Berlin.

The conduct of the French Government at this crisis is hard to fathom. Its swift and unaccountable changes may perhaps be explained by the alternate triumph of peaceful and warlike counsels in the Ministry, which in the month of August under-

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this despatch which warrants the statement of the editor of the "Malmesbury Diaries" (ii, 339 *n.*) that we then offered Prussia armed support if France attacked her, and promised to make a demonstration with forty ships of the line. That was not proposed until the middle of September, in reply to French threats.

[1] "F. O.," Austria, 14. Keith on 3rd August stated that the Emperor was friendly to us, but he was the ally of France, though he would not act with her in the Dutch Question.

[2] "F. O.," Prussia, 11. Carmarthen to Ewart, 27th July.

[3] Wittichen, 81, shows that Wilhelmina herself worked hard to dissuade her brother from a mediation conjointly with France.

went some alterations. Towards Great Britain the tone was at first quite reassuring, a fact which may be ascribed to the friendly relations between Montmorin and Eden. Our envoy had visited London in July, and therefore, on his return to Paris at the end of the month, fully knew the intentions of his chiefs. Their pacific nature appeared in a proposal, which he was charged to make to Montmorin, for the discontinuance of warlike preparations on both sides until such time as notice might be given for their renewal. On 4th August the French Minister cordially received this proposal,[1] and it was acted on with sincerity until the crisis of the middle of September. But Eden soon found that the French Court intended forcibly to intervene if the Prussian troops entered the United Provinces, and that Montmorin had rejected the recent proposal from Berlin for a Franco-Prussian intervention.[2] Here, surely, the French Minister committed a surprising blunder. The traditional friendship between their Courts should have led him to welcome a proposal which would have kept England entirely out of the question. Probably he counted on procuring better terms from the ever complaisant Court of Berlin. If so, he erred egregiously. By repelling the advances of Prussia, he threw that Power into the arms of Great Britain; and Pitt was shrewd enough to accord a hearty welcome.

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[1] "F. O.," France, 25. Eden to Carmarthen, 4th August 1787.

[2] *Ibid.*, 8th August.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE

This treaty produced an effect throughout the whole of Europe by its mere existence, without military preparations or force of arms.—VON SYBEL.

Pitt has already astonished all Europe by the alacrity of the late armament, and his name as a War Minister is now as high as that of his father ever was.—THE EARL OF MORNINGTON TO THE DUKE OF RUTLAND, 17th October 1787.

THE events described in the last chapter had brought England and Prussia to a crisis at which, despite their strong mutual suspicion, common action was imperiously needed in order to save the Dutch Netherlands from French domination. As we have seen, no British statesman had ever acquiesced in the supremacy of France in that country; and it is clear from the British archives that Pitt now took a keen interest in thwarting her designs. The draft of the official answer to Eden's despatch of 4th August 1787 is entirely in Pitt's writing, and it was sent without alteration or addition by the Foreign Minister, Lord Carmarthen—an unusual circumstance, which shows the masterful grip of the chief over matters of high import. In this despatch, of 10th August, he welcomed the assurance of Montmorin that warlike preparations would be stopped until further notice. Great Britain would, however, renew them after due notice if France assembled a force at Givet, on the Belgian border. He then referred pointedly to rumours that French transports had sailed for Amsterdam—a measure which would prejudice "the great work of conciliation which it is so much the object of the two Courts to forward and promote." French ships were also reported as laying in stores of food in British ports, a proceeding which would have been stopped but for the friendly assurances now received. He then referred to the invitation of the loyal provinces of Friesland and Zealand, that

Great Britain would mediate on their behalf, and hinted that this might be done. The despatch closed with the following dignified remonstrance on the subject of the outrages of the Free Corps in Holland:

> I am here also under the painful necessity of adding that the conduct held in the Province of Holland, apparently instigated by those who have all along appeared the instruments of France, seems to increase, instead of diminishing in violence. I enclose a copy of an address presented by the Free Corps of that Province, which it is intended that you should show to M. de M[ontmorin]. It cannot escape that Minister how little such a step is calculated to promote an accommodation or a suspension of hostilities, which his language so strongly recommends.[1]

Meanwhile Pitt had sent his cousin, William Wyndham Grenville, to collect information at The Hague. As we saw in Chapter XII, the attainments of that young statesman, then Paymaster of the Forces, were eminently sound. His hard and practical nature stood in contrast to the sensitive and imaginative Harris, about whom George III trenchantly wrote to Pitt, that he was so easily discouraged that it was well he held no military command. Probably Pitt held the same opinion about Harris, whose forward policy he had long held in check. That there was some widespread distrust of him is clear from the observation of the Duke of Dorset, that "he was playing the devil at The Hague."[2] In any case, it was well to have independent advice, and the selection of so young a man as Grenville is a tribute to his prudence and ability.

He reached The Hague on 30th July, and during his stay of about three weeks succeeded in clearing up many points preliminary to the mediation. The letters which passed between him and Pitt bespeak a resolve on both sides to settle matters peaceably if possible. The following sentence in Pitt's letter of 1st August is noteworthy: "It is very material that our friends should not lose the superiority of force within the Republic, while we are labouring to protect it from interference from without." Six days later he wrote that the prospect was still favourable, but that, if French troops were to assemble at Givet, it might be needful to resume naval preparations, so as to reassure Prussia.[1] Equally hopeful in tone is his letter of 2nd August to Earl Cornwallis, Governor-General of India. After pointing out that Great Britain could not allow France to become mistress of the Dutch Netherlands, and thereby add enormously to her naval strength and her power of aggression in India, he expressed the hope that the mediation of the three Powers would take place; but, failing an apology from the Estates of Holland, the King of Prussia would order his troops into that province, and take steps for "maintaining the just rights of the Stadholder and the constitution and independence of the Republic." If war broke out, Cornwallis was at once to strike at the Dutch settlement of Trincomalee, in Ceylon; while a force from England would be sent to reduce the Cape of Good Hope—the first sign in Pitt's letters of the importance which he attached to that post.[2]

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[1] "F. O.," France, 25.

[2] "Auckland Journals," i, 520. Lord Loughborough, in a letter of 13th October 1787 to Lord Carlisle stated that Grenville's mission was not due to distrust of Harris ("Carlisle P.," 652). But this seems to me very doubtful in view of the letters between Pitt and Grenville.

Despite suspicious signs to the contrary, the French Cabinet at that time probably wished for a peaceful mediation; but the Courts of London and Versailles differed sharply as to the way of action. Pitt and Carmarthen held that reparation to the King of Prussia for the insult to his sister was a purely personal affair, distinct from the political issues. France now denied this; she belittled the affront to the Princess, and induced the Estates of Holland to frame an apology which was in the main a justification of their conduct. If Montmorin had pressed that body to make an adequate apology, it would certainly have been forthcoming. The stiff-neckedness of the Estates of Holland was due to their expectation of armed support from France if matters came to the sword; and the action of the Marquis de Vérac, the French envoy, justified their confidence.

In truth, French policy wore different aspects at Paris and at The Hague. Montmorin assumed an air of injured innocence when Eden transmitted to him Pitt's remonstrances. On 15th August he indignantly denied the truth of the rumours about French transports sailing to Holland and of the food supplies drawn from England. He also complained of the harshness of Pitt's reference to the assembling of troops at Givet, an action which was a natural retort to the muster of Prussians at their fortress of Wesel on the Rhine; and he merely laughed at the address of the Free Corps.[1] A week later Eden reported that Montmorin was anxious to settle the Dutch troubles peacefully and speedily, and would therefore recall the over-zealous Vérac from The Hague. Pitt, however, refused to allow that Prussia was exceeding her just rights in claiming satisfaction for the insult. The fit way of ending the matter, he argued, would be for the Estates of Holland to apologize frankly and fully, whereupon the three Powers must insist on the dispersal and disarming of the Free Corps as a needful preliminary to the joint mediation.[2] On 28th August Eden heard that the French Government would not form the camp at Givet, it being understood that the Prussian monarch would limit his claims to the gaining of personal satisfaction, which France promised to procure from the Estates of Holland. This welcome news led Pitt to express the hope that an agreement would at once be framed for stopping the excesses of the Free Corps. Thus, so far as our dealings with Montmorin ran, there seemed, even at the end of August 1787, the likelihood of a peaceful settlement. A signal proof of Pitt's hopefulness is afforded by his letter of 28th August to Cornwallis at Calcutta. In this he speaks of the need of settling the personal question between the King of Prussia and the Estates of Holland as preliminary to the general settlement of the dispute. Even of that he cherished hopes, but he deemed caution and preparation so eminently necessary as to order the despatch of another regiment to Bombay.[3]

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[1] "Dropmore P.," iii, 408-15. For the missions of Grenville to The Hague and Paris, see my article in the "Eng. Hist. Rev." for April 1909.

[2] Pitt MSS., 102.

In truth, the central knot of the whole tangle was at The Hague. In order to understand the position there we must remember that the States-General, representing the Union, had not called on France for aid, in case of hostilities. Thanks to the skill and private influence of Harris, a majority of that body still upheld the claims of the Stadholder, deprecated any appeal to the Court of Versailles, and sought to procure from the Estates of Holland an apology to the King of Prussia. The Estates, however, stoutly refused to give anything more than a complacent explanation of the incident. The spirit which animated that assembly appears in the comment of one of the leading Patriots on the Prussian ultimatum: "A sovereign body can never apologize to the wife of its first servant."[1] The Memoirs of Count de Portes, a Swiss officer who espoused the cause of the Dutch Patriots and helped to raise a regiment for them, show the cause of their confidence. He wrote on 14th September: "Though the Prussians are at our gates, they seem to me still at the sport of politics, and I can scarcely believe that they will put themselves between our waters and *our French*. At the worst we will open our sluices and drown ourselves."[2]

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[1] "F. O.," France, 25. Eden to Carmarthen, 16th August 1787.

[2] *Ibid.* Carmarthen to Eden, 24th August.

[3] Pitt MSS., 102; and "Cornwallis Corresp.," i, 333-7.

There was the strength of the Patriots. In a legal sense their case was weak; but their audacious energy even now promised to snatch victory from the inert Orange party. The Free Corps in the months of July and August became more numerous and insolent than ever, and it was a notorious fact that hundreds of French officers and soldiers had passed into their ranks.[3] Thus strengthened, they marched about the country, taking some places by force, and in several cases deposing the Regents, or chief magistrates appointed by the Stadholder. On all sides they despoiled the property of opponents, and carried confusion to the gates of The Hague. On 1st August Harris thus summed up his hopes and wishes to Carmarthen: "If I am de-Witted, don't let me be outwitted, but revenge me."[4] Count Bentinck also wrote: "the majority of Holland have made themselves masters of our lives and property; . . . they are masters of the purse, and of the sword, and of the Courts of Justice."[5] That arch-intriguer, Vérac, on 31st August, the very day of his recall, assured the Patriots that France would never desert them. This boast was consonant with the whole policy of France respecting the Free Corps. She had rejected the Prussian proposal for their suppression, which accompanied the plan of a Franco-Prussian mediation. On 29th August Montmorin stated to Eden that it was impossible to disarm the Free Corps, and on 11th September when stiff remonstrances came from London on this subject, he airily declared that France could no more control those troops than the waves of the sea.[6]

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 371.

[2] "Méms. du Comte de Portes" (1904), 92.

[3] "Auckland Journals," i, 234, 259.

[4] B.M. Add. MSS., 28061.

[5] "Dropmore P.," iii, 418.

[6] "F. O.," France, 25, 26. Eden to Carmarthen, 29th August and 11th September.

Is it surprising that the Pitt Ministry came to the conclusion that the real aim of the French Government was to amuse England and Prussia with fair words, until its partisans gained a complete mastery in the United Provinces and forced the States-General to send to Paris a formal demand for help, with which the Court of Versailles could not but comply? Whether Montmorin was playing a double game, or whether his hand was forced by other members of his Cabinet, is far from clear.[1] Certainly the contrast between his fair professions and French intrigues in Holland inspired increasing distrust, and served to bring about the *dénouement* which shattered the prestige of the French monarchy.

It was long before the crisis came. Only by slow degrees did Pitt, Carmarthen, and Harris shake off distrust of Prussia. The length of time attending the transit of despatches between London and Berlin (eleven days on the average even in summer) clogged the negotiations. At Paris the Prussian envoy, Görtz, intrigued against the Anglo-Prussian understanding, and represented Eden as minimizing the insult to the Princess of Orange. At once Pitt sent to Eden a courteous but firm request for an explanation of his words, which had caused a sensation at Berlin. Of course Eden was able to explain them entirely to Pitt's satisfaction.[2] But it is clear that the mutual dislike at London and Berlin could have been ended only by the fears aroused by the action of France.

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[1] The feuds in his Ministry, and his consistently peaceful attitude, seem to absolve him from the charge of duplicity. French troops, disguised as Free Corps, were afterwards captured in Holland and had on them orders and instructions written by de Ségur, the French War Minister, who resigned in August 1787 ("Auckland Journals," i, 259). It seems probable therefore that some Ministers egged on the French agents and the Patriots, while Montmorin strove to hold them in check. Louis XVI also used his influence to prevent a war with Prussia, which he disliked (see Garden, "Traités," v, 85 *n*.). The appointment of Loménie de Brienne to a kind of dictatorship seems also to have made for peace; it coincides with the resolve, formed about 20th August (see Barral de Montferrat, *op. cit.*, 214), to recall Vérac from The Hague; and on 31st August Montmorin signed with Eden a convention for ending irritating disputes in East Indian affairs. I have no space to go into that question; but it had been reported (*e.g.*, by Eden on 9th November 1786, Pitt MSS., 110) that the French were about to gain control over Dutch East India ports. Rumours to that effect had embittered the contest in Holland, and they were laid to rest by that convention.

[2] See the MSS. of P. V. Smith in the "Beaufort P." (Hist. MSS. Commission) 357, for the parts of Pitt's letter of 8th September, omitted, very strangely, by the editor of the "Auckland Journals" (i, 191-2), also *ibid.*, i, 198.

In order to remove the distrust prevalent at Berlin, Pitt and Carmarthen sent to that Court full copies of their correspondence with France, which convinced Frederick William of their good faith and the duplicity of Versailles.[1] He saw that France was dragging on the affair so that the approach of autumn might hinder the effective action of his troops. Suspicion of this helped to bring England and Prussia to accord. But the tidings which spurred on Pitt and Carmarthen to more decisive action came from The Hague. On 20th August Harris reported that a body of Free Corps was approaching that town, that he was preparing to leave it in haste, and had sent all important papers away. On hearing this news and perhaps that brought back by Grenville on 23rd August, the Cabinet resolved to send General Fawcett to Cassel to hire 5,000 Hessians for the help of the loyal Dutch provinces, and others for the British service—that detestable expedient which parsimony made inevitable at every alarm of war. Harris was also empowered to order up a British ship lying at Harwich, laden with gunpowder and stores for the help of the Stadholder's forces.[2] On the same day Carmarthen instructed Ewart to warn the Prussian Court that, though we had agreed with France to suspend warlike preparations, yet we were ready to send out at least as large a fleet as France could possibly equip.[3] Ewart, in his reply of 4th September, stated that but for this encouraging news Frederick William might once more have wavered, owing to the insidious intrigues of the French party, and the discouraging reports which came from the Duke of Brunswick. The nerves of that veteran were unstrung by visions of the spectral camp at Givet, and he mourned over the unpreparedness of his own force at Wesel, which, he declared, could not march before 7th September.[4] These tidings had once more depressed the royal thermometer at Berlin; but the news from London came just in time to send the mercury up again. On 3rd September, then, Frederick William drew up an ultimatum to the

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[1] Luckwaldt, 71.

[2] "F. O.," Holland, 17.

[3] "F. O.," Prussia, 11. Carmarthen to Ewart, 24th August.

[4] Luckwaldt, 80 *n.*, here corrects one of many mis-statements in P. de Witt's "Une Invasion prussienne en Hollande," 285, that the Prussians were ready to march by 20th July.

Estates of Holland, and bade Hertzberg come to a close understanding with England. On 7th September he resolved to recall Thulemeyer, and urged the British Government to declare what forces it would set in motion if France attacked the Prussian army in Holland.[1]

Late on that day there arrived at Berlin news which ended the last hesitations of Frederick William. The Porte, long fretting under the yoke imposed by the Treaty of Kainardji, and irritated by the proceedings of the Czarina, had declared war on Russia. This came almost as a bolt from the blue. No one had believed the Sultan capable of so much energy as to attack the Muscovites; and rumours spread at Vienna and Petersburg that this was due to British gold. The insinuation was probably false. As will appear in Chapter XXI, the Turks had been goaded into war, and relied on help from Sweden, perhaps also from Prussia. Undoubtedly their action greatly embarrassed Joseph II, who was bound by compacts with Russia, the enemy of Turkey, and with France, her friend. Late on 7th September Finckenstein pointed this out to Ewart, and added that Prussia and England ought at once to frame an agreement, and intervene effectively without fear of France.[2] This time the decision was final. Ewart reported that the news of Turkey's challenge to Russia caused all the more joy at Berlin as the party of Marie Antoinette had gained an ascendancy at Versailles, which implied the strengthening of the Franco-Austrian alliance and a proportionate loosening of the ties linking Joseph II to Russia.[3] The reasoning was not sound; for it was probable that France, acting in close concert with the two Empires, would partition Turkey with a view to the seizure of Egypt and other commanding posts in the East.

Nevertheless, Prussia looked on the war in the East as giving her a free hand in the West; and on 7th September she decided to act in the Netherlands. Four days later a French envoy, Groschlag, arrived in Berlin with offers, partly enticing, partly threatening, which might once more have drawn the wavering impulses of the King towards Paris.[1] But now, after many months of uphill fight, all the omens favoured the Anglo-Prussian cause.

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[1] Hertzberg, "Recueil des Traités," ii, 428-30; "F. O.," Prussia, 12. Ewart to Carmarthen, 4th and 8th September.

[2] *Ibid.* 8th September.

[3] "The prevailing opinion of this Court is the Emperor will . . . sacrifice his alliance with Russia to that of 1756 [with France]" (Ewart to Keith, 11th September 1787. B.M. Add. MSS., 35539).

On 13th September, before the refusal of the Prussian ultimatum by the Estates of Holland had been received, the Duke of Brunswick crossed the Dutch frontier. In Guelderland and parts of Utrecht the Prussians were hailed as deliverers; even the city of Utrecht opened its gates, owing to the cowardice of the Rhinegrave of Salm, who soon abandoned the cause for which he had blustered so long. Nowhere did the Free Corps make any firm stand. Even in Holland their excesses had turned public opinion strongly against them. It is said that the weather prevented the opening of the sluices; but the half-heartedness of the defence, and the eagerness of the Orange party for deliverance, probably explain the *débâcle*. When the Dutch have been united and determined, their defence of their land has always been stubborn. Now it was not even creditable; and this fact may be cited as damning to the Patriots' claim that they stood for the nation. On 20th September the Prince of Orange made his entry into The Hague amidst boundless enthusiasm. Sir James Harris also received a striking ovation, which rewarded him for the long months of struggle.

Now, while the Patriots were in consternation at their overthrow, our envoy clinched his triumph by persuading the Estates of Holland to reverse their previous acts against the Stadholder's authority, and to rescind a resolution which they had passed on 9th September appealing for armed aid from France. The cancelling of this appeal on 21st September was a matter of great importance, as it deprived France of a pretext for armed intervention. The receipt of this news at Versailles helped to cool the warlike ardour of the French Court.

There the temper of the Ministry had fluctuated alarmingly. The recall of Vérac seemed to assure a peaceful settlement. But on 4th September Montmorin sent to Eden a despatch which ran directly counter to the British and Prussian proposals. It stated that the Dutch towns, where the Free Corps had forcibly changed the magistrates, "*ont déjà consommé la réforme*; . . . *c'est une affaire terminée*." As for the Prince of Orange, he would do well to abdicate in favour of his son.[1] Pitt of course indignantly rejected both proposals; and his temper is seen in the phrase of his letter of 14th September to Eden, that if France was determined to keep her predominance in the United Provinces, she must fight for it.[2]

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[1] Wittichen, 92-4; also *ibid.*, 97, for the Anglo-Prussian Convention of 2nd October.

An acute crisis now set in. While Carmarthen warned Montmorin that England would not remain a quiet spectator of French intervention, that Minister on 16th September issued a Declaration that France could not refuse the appeal for help which had come from the Estates of Holland. He charged England with having plotted the whole affair with Prussia, and asserted that, inconvenient though the time was now that the fate of the Turkish Empire stood at hazard, France must in honour draw the sword.[3]

This Declaration drew from Pitt an equally stiff retort. In a circular despatch intended for all our ambassadors, which he himself drew up, he declared that England could not admit the right of France, owing to its treaty with the Dutch Republic, "to support a party in one of the Provinces in a measure expressly disavowed by a majority of the States-General; and His Majesty has repeatedly declared the impossibility of his being indifferent to any armed interference of France in the affairs of the Republic, which, if unopposed, must necessarily tend to consequences dangerous to the constitutional independence of those Provinces, and affecting in many respects the interests and security of his dominions. His Majesty has therefore found himself under the necessity of taking measures for equipping a considerable naval armament and for augmenting his land forces." Nevertheless he still desired "an amicable settlement of the points in dispute."[4] As many as forty sail of the line were immediately prepared for sea; and here we may notice that Pitt's care for the navy ensured a preponderance which virtually decided the dispute.

In order to see whether war might be averted, George III suggested, on 16th September, that someone should be sent to Paris who could deal with the French Ministers better than Eden did. Pitt therefore decided, on 19th September, to despatch Grenville, charging him distinctly to declare that Great Britain approved the action of the King of Prussia, and would resist an armed intervention by France; also that the settlement in the United Provinces must be such as to restore to the Stadholder his constitutional powers, and prevent the ascendency of the party hostile to Britain. A secondary aim of Grenville's mission was the forming of a friendly understanding with France for the cessation of warlike preparations on both sides of the Channel—a proof of Pitt's watchful care over the exchequer.[1]

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[1] "Auckland Journals," i, 192.

[2] *Ibid.*, 195.

[3] "F. O.," France, 26. Eden to Carmarthen, 11th and 13th September

[4] The original. in Pitt's handwriting, is in "F. O.," Russia, 15, dated 21st September, and inscribed "To all the King's Ministers abroad except Paris and The Hague."

Montmorin received Grenville coldly on 28th September at Versailles; but his reserve was merely a cloak to hide his discomfiture. Nine days before he had assured Eden, in the confidence which followed on a private dinner, that "if the Estates of Holland should prove so defenceless, or so intimidated as to give way to whatever might be forced under the present attack, he would advise His Most Christian Majesty not to engage in war." If matters went more favourably he would advise him to draw the sword; but, as for his own feelings, he was weary of the Dutch Question, and only sought the means for getting rid of it creditably, so that France might turn her attention to another quarter, obviously the East.[2] Grenville, after hearing all this from Eden, and receiving the good news from The Hague, of course put the right interpretation on Montmorin's *non possumus*, and sought to facilitate his stately retreat. He was at once waved back. Montmorin would make no promise as to her course of action so long as the Prussians were in Holland. Even on the question of disarmament by the two Powers—a matter of the utmost moment to France—he would make no pledge, though Grenville strongly urged him to do so. Two more interviews passed with the same frigid negations; and on 3rd October Grenville returned to London, harbouring a shrewd suspicion that the actions of the Court of Versailles would on this occasion tally with Montmorin's words.

Such proved to be the case. France did nothing, to the unbounded disgust of her partisans in Holland. Amsterdam shut its gates and endured a short siege from the Prussians in the belief that help must come from Paris. Our diplomatic agent,

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[1] "Dropmore P.," iii, 426-36; E. D. Adams, *op. cit.*, 6, 7; "Buckingham P.," i, 326-31.

[2] *Ibid.* Eden to Carmarthen, 20th September.

W. A. Miles, writing from Liège on 1st October, reported that the burgomasters of Utrecht and Gorcum had passed through that city on their way to Paris in the conviction that "France would never leave them in the lurch, and that her troops would certainly march to the relief of Amsterdam."[1] Their consternation must have been great on reaching Givet to find that there was no camp there.[2] The truth then flashed upon them that the French agents had relied on bluster and the Free Corps. Disappointment at the inaction of the French Court probably hastened the surrender of Amsterdam, which opened its gates on 10th October. The capture by the Prussians of many French soldiers, who declared that they were acting for that Government, revealed the sinister conduct of some, at least, of the French Ministers, and of Vérac.[3] A letter of Grenville to Eden on 26th October 1787 shows the surprise and disgust of our Ministers at this flagrant bad faith. He says he is "mortified" at finding that Ségur, Minister for War, had sent signed orders for parties of French artillerymen to march north to the frontier, and put themselves under the command of an adventurer named Esterhazy. "His (Ségur's) orders again expressly direct the march into Holland in disguise, and point out the places where the men are to be equipped with *habits de paysan* for this purpose."[4]

The surrender of Amsterdam gave the last blow to the war party at Versailles. Up to 14th October Pitt felt the utmost concern, as appears in his letter of that date to Eden; but the reply of that envoy three days later showed that Ségur and his colleagues now bowed to the inevitable. Their peaceful mood was doubtless confirmed by the evasive and discouraging answer sent by Austria to the appeal for help.[5] The Emperor had a large force in Belgium, but none too large to hold down that people. Moreover, the prospect of war with Turkey imposed caution at Vienna.

The chief danger now was that France would join Russia and

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[1] "Dropmore P.," iii, 435; "Méms. de Dedem de Gelder," 7.

[2] *Ibid.*, iii, 435.

[3] "F. O.," Holland, 19. Carmarthen to Harris, 12th October; "Auckland Journals," i, 234.

[4] B.M. Add. MSS., 29475.

[5] "F. O.," Austria, 14. Keith to Carmarthen, 24th October 1787. On 14th November Joseph II informed Keith that he thoroughly approved of the Dutch settlement.

Austria in the dismemberment of Turkey. Fear of such a step haunted Pitt, who always surveyed the Dutch Question from the standpoint of India. Thus we find him on 8th October charging Eden to watch most carefully the attitude of France to the events in the East. The replies of that envoy were, as usual, reassuring. France, according to Eden, only desired peace, and the scheme of seizing Egypt was "wholly wild."[1] Pitt therefore decided to press forward, and to persuade France to give an unequivocal assurance of her pacific intentions, as a prelude to disarmament on both sides. His letter of 14th October to Eden on this topic shows a grip of essentials, together with a surprising *finesse*. While anxious to induce France to disarm at the earliest possible moment, he advised Eden to humour Alvensleben, the special Prussian envoy at Paris, and to convince him that we were giving Prussia firm support and were not disposed to patch up a premature settlement.[2] Evidently Pitt's interest in diplomacy, though belated, was keen.

After long correspondence with Berlin, and much demurring at Versailles, a Declaration and Counter-Declaration were drafted and signed by the British envoys and Montmorin on 27th October. The French document averred that, as it had never been the intention of the King of France to intervene in Dutch affairs, he now retained no hostile views in any quarter respecting them, and therefore consented to disarm.[3] This public denial of what had notoriously been the aim of his Government, and this promise to renounce all ideas of revenge on Prussia, sent a thrill of astonishment through the diplomatic world. Never had France so openly abandoned her partisans or so publicly proclaimed her impotence. If Pitt (as French historians have asserted) had persistently sought to humiliate the Court of Versailles, he could not have succeeded more completely. But this Counter-Declaration was merely the climax of a diplomatic game which had taken a threatening turn only since the beginning of September The fact is that the French Ministers, and still more their agents in Holland, had precipitated the crisis by the actions of the Free Corps at the very time which proved to be most unfavourable for them. By their conduct they courted failure; but it was the outbreak of war in the East which made that failure complete and crushing.

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[1] "Auckland Journals," i, 217, 221.

[2] *Ibid.*, 227, 228.

[3] *Ibid.*, 255-8; "Ann. Reg." (1787), 283.

On the other hand, the conduct of the friends of the House of Orange, after long delays and blunders, was singularly astute when the crisis came. The conduct of the Princess deserves the highest praise. The diplomacy of Harris and Ewart was a marvel of skill. As for Eden, he had little more to do than to obey orders, though he sometimes toned down the harsh phrases of Pitt and Carmarthen.[1] The action of the Prussians was trenchant, but it could not have been so but for their confidence in the promised support of the Sea Power. Pitt's fostering care of the national resources, and his rehabilitation of the navy had made it virtually impossible for the semi-bankrupt French State to enter single-handed on a war with Great Britain and Prussia. This was the determining factor in the problem; and every statesman at Paris, London, and Berlin knew it.

But something more than sound finance is needed in a complex and critical situation. There the qualities of foresight, tact, and determination are of priceless worth; and on all sides it was admitted that Pitt displayed them to a high degree. The restraint which kept Harris strictly within bounds until the fit moment arrived is not more remarkable than the boldness which reaped all possible advantages from the daring *coup* of the Princess of Orange. Eden wrote on 1st November, that he had *shuddered* at the courage of Pitt in braving the chances of a war with France.[2] But the young statesman knew how far he could go with safety; he discerned the essential fact that France could not fight, and that Montmorin adopted his negative attitude in order to hide that important secret. If Montmorin chose to justify her disarmament by assertions which were equally false and humiliating, that was a matter for him, not for the statesmen of Great Britain.

Pitt's conduct of this, his first great diplomatic campaign, shines all the more brightly by contrast with the vacillations of Frederick William and the stupendous blunders of the French Government. Adverting briefly to these last, we may note that France had little ground for interference so long as a majority of the States-General deprecated such action; and, thanks to Harris, that majority, except for a few days, held firm. The French Government therefore founded its hopes on the majority in the Province of Holland, and on the high-handed proceedings of the Free Corps, which it secretly abetted. Montmorin repulsed two overtures from Berlin because of the insistence of Prussia that those corps should be suppressed. This action it was, more perhaps than the resentment of Frederick William at the insult to his sister, which helped to bring Prussia and Great Britain into line. France also finally denied the right of Frederick William to gain reparation for that insult, though she at first recognized the justice of his claim. Further, when he sent forward his troops, she made ready for war, and then adopted the attitude of sullen resentment, which rendered a joint mediation by the three Powers impossible. This conduct in its turn implied the lapse of the Franco-Dutch treaty of 1785, and the triumph of British and Prussian influence in the United Provinces. Frenchmen also saw in this event another proof of the uselessness of the Austrian alliance on which Marie Antoinette had staked her popularity; and the *débâcle* in Holland was a deadly blow at the influence of that unfortunate Queen. Finally France admitted her defeat in terms at which friends and foes alike scoffed. Not without reason, then, did Napoleon afterwards assert that the French Revolution was due to three causes, the Battle of Rossbach, the Diamond Necklace scandal, and the ousting of French influence from the United Provinces in 1787. The judgement is curiously superficial in that it passes over the fiscal and agrarian evils which potently conduced to the great upheaval; but it reflected the opinion of that generation, which looked on deficits, dearths, and bread-riots as dispensations of Providence, of trifling import when compared with the decay in prestige of an ancient monarchy. Something may be said for this view of things in the case of France. For years that monarchy had lived on prestige. The surrender of October 1787 now proclaimed to the world its decrepitude.

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[1] "Auckland Journals," i, 264

[2] *Ibid.*, 263.

With the events attending the restoration of the Stadholder's power and the constitution of the year 1747 we are not here concerned. Pitt had rightly refused to interfere until the efforts of the Patriots to establish French influence had become a positive danger to England. His interest in those troubles was largely grounded on naval and colonial considerations. If the United Provinces became an annexe of France, their fleet, their valuable colonies, and their once prosperous East India Company, would be cast into the balance against us. Now that this danger was past, he sought to remove all chance of its recurrence by suggesting the formation of a treaty of alliance with the Republic. On 5th October the first proposal to this effect was framed at Whitehall on condition that the two States should assist one another in case of attack, and guarantee the possession of their territories; but from the outset the Foreign Office set its face sternly against any concession such as "Free Ships, Free Goods," on which the Dutch were likely to insist.

There was, however, another stumbling stone in the way. The Dutch felt keenly the surrender of Negapatam to Great Britain, and they urged that, as that sacrifice had been forced on them in 1784 for the greater security of our settlements in the Carnatic, its retrocession was a natural consequence and a pledge of the friendship now happily restored. The Pitt Ministry, however, viewed the matter in the cold light of self-interest, and rejected the demand, in spite of the reiterated assurances of the Prince of Orange, the new Grand Pensionary, Van der Spiegel, and other friends of England, that they could not otherwise accept the proffered treaty. Even Harris finally confessed his inability to bend their will, and he advised Pitt and Carmarthen not to imperil the alliance on this single detail. Prussia, he said, had given way at some points in her negotiations with the Dutch; and it was impolitic for us to be too stiff.[1]

Pitt, however, would not give way. Probably he considered that the Stadholder's party, now in power, needed our support more than we needed his; or he may have grounded his decision on the need of preventing the rise of any Power other than that of England in South India, where Tippoo Sahib was always a danger. He refused to do more than offer to negotiate on this question within the space of six months after the signature of the treaty. The negotiation was never even begun; and thus the treaty signed at The Hague on 15th April 1788 was always viewed with disfavour by the Dutch. The guarantee of the restored Stadholderate by Great Britain, and the promise of each State to assist in the defence of the possessions of the other, were in themselves quite satisfactory; but the compact lacked the solidity which comes only from entire confidence and goodwill.[2]

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 28063. Harris to Pitt, 22nd February 1788.

[2] Martens, iv, 372-7; Garden, v, 89-92.

The formation of an alliance with Prussia in the same year also came about in a manner more brilliant than sound. Of course, in all such affairs each Power tries to bring the other over to its own standpoint; and much tugging must needs take place between a military and a naval State. Frederick William and his chief statesman, Hertzberg, had just achieved the first success of their careers, and largely owing to the firmness of Pitt. Assured of their supremacy in Germany and Holland, they now sought to guard against the dangers threatening them from the East. The news which came in the month of November 1787, that Austria would join Russia in her war with Turkey, caused the gravest concern at Berlin, and therefore enhanced the value of a British alliance. The growing weakness of France and the power of Pitt to handle a crisis firmly therefore put a new face on Prussian policy. Instead of waiting on Paris, the Berlin Cabinet looked more and more expectantly towards London.

Already Frederick William had signified his desire for a union with the Dutch "in order to pave the way to a Triple Alliance between England, Prussia, and Holland as soon as it may be possible to accomplish it."[1] But the Pitt Ministry, distrustful of an alliance with Prussia unless Russia also came in, treated this overture very coyly. From a letter which the first Earl Camden wrote to Pitt on 18th October, we gather that the Earl was far more inclined to such an alliance than Pitt had shown himself to be at a recent meeting of the Cabinet. Camden favoured the plan as tending to consolidate our influence in Holland—a matter of the utmost moment. "We have escaped miraculously," he writes, "from the most perilous situation we ever experienced, and shall be mad if we slip the opportunity of rooting out the French interest in that country for ever . . . and that will be compleatly effected by a Prussian alliance." It would also free Prussia from slavish dependence upon France. As for the fear that it would drive France to a close compact with Russia and Austria, the Earl treated that danger as remote.[2]

Carmarthen, and probably Pitt also, looked on the danger as real enough to give them pause. Not till 2nd December did Carmarthen return any specific answer; and then he expressed the doubt whether it was desirable to form a Triple Aliance then, as there were rumours of a projected union between these three Powers, which might become a reality if England, Prussia, and Holland coalesced.[1] If that hostile league were formed, it would then be desirable to come to terms, and even to include Denmark, Sweden, and the lesser German States. It is curious that he did not name Poland; but here we find the first definite sign of that league of the smaller States with Prussia and Great Britain which afterwards played so important a part in Pitt's foreign policy.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 12. Ewart to Carmarthen, 27th September 1787.

[2] Pitt MSS., 119.

The caution of Pitt was justified. In a few days' time Sweden came knocking at our door, asking for admittance along with Denmark. The adventurous character of Gustavus III will appear in the sequel. Here we may note that Carmarthen politely waved aside this offer of alliance from a suspicion that he was planning a blow at Russia.[2] The blow did not fall until the middle of July 1788; but then the sudden summons of the Swedish King to the Empress Catharine to hand back part of Russian Finland, and to accept his mediation in the Russo-Turkish War, showed the meaning of his proposal at Christmas 1787.

Only by slow degrees did the eastern horizon clear. But when France showed her resentment at the participation of Austria in the Turkish War, the spectre of a hostile Triple Alliance was laid; and then, but not till then, Pitt showed more favour to the Prussian proposals. Yet here again there was need of caution. The Eastern Question touched Prussia far more closely than England. If Joseph II gained his heart's desire—Moldavia and Wallachia—and Catharine extended her boundary to the River Dniester, the greatness and even the safety of Prussia and of Poland would be hopelessly compromised.[3] Accordingly Prussia sought by all means short of drawing the sword to help the Turks in their unequal struggle. She cantonned large forces near the Austrian border, hinted that she would be glad to offer her mediation for the purpose of securing a reasonable peace, and sent an official disguised as a merchant by way of Venice to Constantinople in order to encourage the

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[1] Pitt MSS., 119. Carmarthen to Ewart, 2nd December 1787. Fraser, our envoy at St. Petersburg, reported on 1st November that Austria was proposing there a Triple Alliance, but it was coolly received ("F. O.," Russia, 15).

[2] *Ibid.* Carmarthen to Ewart, 26th December.

[3] See Ewart's masterly Memorandum in "Dropmore P.," ii, 44-9.

Sultan to a vigorous prosecution of the war.[1] Hertzberg also urged the formation of a league between Prussia, England, and the smaller States with a view to the guarantee of the Turkish possessions in Europe.[2]

To this proposal the British Government gave no encouragement. So far as appears from the despatches of this year, the fate of Turkey was not a matter of much concern to Pitt and Carmarthen. Indeed, not until 2nd April did they vouchsafe an answer to the Prussian proposal of alliance; and then they based their acceptance on the need of safeguarding the situation in Holland. Other States, it was added, might be invited to join the Triple Alliance in order effectively to counterbalance the jealous efforts to which it might give rise; but Great Britain declined to bind herself to any guarantee of the Sultan's dominions. If he were in sore straits, Great Britain would support Prussia in gaining reasonable terms for him, but she would not favour any active intervention on his behalf. Still less would she support the notion (outlined by Hertzberg) that Prussia should acquire an indemnity for any gains that Austria might make in the present war.[3] The key-note of British policy was firmly struck in this sentence: "The great object which we have in view is the continuance of peace, as far as that is not inconsistent with our essential interests. It is with that view that the alliance of Holland has been thought so material, as rendering any attack upon us less probable. With the same view we are desirous of cultivating the closest connections with the Court of Berlin."[4] That is to say, the proposed Triple Alliance was to be a purely defensive league for the safeguarding of the three States and their colonies.

At Berlin, however, now that Catharine had finally waved aside the friendly offers of British and Prussian mediation, the Eastern crisis eclipsed all other topics. By degrees Hertzberg laid his plans for the aggrandizement of Prussia, whatever might befall the Turks.[1] As will appear more fully in a later chapter, he expected that Joseph II would gain the whole, or large parts, of Moldavia and Wallachia. The armed mediation of Prussia was to lessen these acquisitions; and as a set-off to them Austria must cede Galicia to the Poles; while their gratitude for the recovery of that great province, torn from them in 1772, was to show itself in the cession to Prussia of the important fortresses and districts, Danzig and Thorn, so necessary for the rounding off of her ragged borders on the East. Such was the scheme which took shape in Hertzberg's fertile brain, and dominated Prussian policy down to the summer of the year 1791.

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[1] Luckwaldt, 100 *et seq.* Ewart found out the secret instructions issued to Dietz, and forwarded them to London on 8th April. They show that Prussia sought by all means to encourage the Turks, but laid her plans so as to get an indemnity in land in case Austria gained land in the south-east.

[2] "F. O.," Prussia, 13. Ewart to Carmarthen, 15th March 1788.

[3] *Ibid.* Ewart to Carmarthen, 15th January 1788. Lecky (v, 232) assigns the first rumours of Prussian indemnities in land to January 1789; but Ewart reported the beginnings of Hertzberg's plan in January 1788.

[4] *Ibid.* Carmarthen to Ewart, 2nd April.

The watchful Ewart forwarded to Whitehall details of this gigantic "deal" (if we may use the Americanism); and as the scheme came to light it aroused deep distrust at Whitehall. At once the Prussian proposal wore a new aspect; and the draft of a treaty drawn up in this sense in the middle of April left little hope of a settlement between the two Powers. In reply to its proposals Pitt and Carmarthen pointed out the vagueness of the Prussian suggestions respecting Turkey, but hinted that an opportunity might come for befriending the Sultan if he were too hard pressed. Further, while promising to help Prussia if she were attacked, they again demanded the like succour from her if any of our colonies were assailed. They also desired to bring into the league Sweden, Denmark, and Portugal. For the present, however, they sought to limit the Anglo-Prussian understanding to the Dutch guarantee, though a closer compact was to be discussed during the visit of the Prussian monarch to his sister at Loo.[2]

This last suggestion was for Ewart himself. The others he was to pass on to Hertzberg. That Minister chafed at this further rebuff to his plans, which now comprised the offer of the armed mediation of Prussia, England, and Holland to Catharine and Joseph. The fondness of Frederick William for France once more appeared; and the French party at Berlin venomously raised its head. England, they avowed, would gain everything from this one-sided compact; for her colonies were to be found in every sea. Why should the troops of the great Frederick be set in motion to help the islanders every time that one of their colonial governors lost his temper? Finally the King declared that he would not send his troops beyond the bounds of Germany and Holland.[1]

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[1] See his letter of 24th November 1787 to Dietz at Constantinople in Häusser, "Deutsche Geschichte," i, 225-6.

[2] "F. O.," Prussia, 13. Carmarthen to Ewart, 14th May 1788.

There seemed little chance of an agreement between the two Courts, until Frederick William set out for his visit to the Prince and Princess of Orange at Loo, and let fall the remark that he hoped to see Sir James Harris there. Already that envoy had asked permission to come to London; and, with the zeal of a convert to the Prussian alliance, he convinced Ministers of its desirability, even if they gave way on certain points. The Instructions drawn up for him on 6th June set forth the need of an Anglo-Prussian alliance in order "to contribute to the general tranquillity." He was also to sound the Prussian monarch as to the inclusion of other Powers, especially Sweden and Denmark; but discussions on this matter were not to stand in the way of the signature of the treaty.[2] George III, now a firm supporter of peace principles, favoured the scheme, as appears from his letter of the same date to the Princess of Orange. He there stated that he approved of an alliance with Prussia, though there might not be time to gain the adhesion of other States; and he expressed the hope that this compact would lead Austria and France to desire the continuance of peace, and thereby conduce to the termination of war in the East.[3]

Fortified by these opinions of the King and Cabinet, Harris prepared to play the game boldly. His handsome person, grand air, and consciousness of former victories gave him an advantage in the discussions with Frederick William, who, thanks to the tact of the Princess, laid aside his earlier prepossessions against the "dictator," and entered into his views. In order to keep the impressionable monarch free from disturbing influences, Harris paid the sum of 200 ducats to a chamberlain if he would ensure the exclusion of a noted partisan of France, Colonel Stein, from the royal chamber during a critical stage in the healing process. The climax came during a ball on 12-13th June. After midnight the King sought out Harris, invited him to walk in the garden, admitted the force of his arguments in favour of an immediate signature of the proposed treaty, and allowed him to speak to his Minister, Alvensleben. While fireworks blazed and courtiers danced, the two Ministers drew up a provisional treaty, to which the King assented on the following morning, 13th June 1788.

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[1] *Ibid.* Ewart to Carmarthen, 27th and 31st May 1788; Wittichen, ch. xx.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 28063.

[3] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 421.

The news of the signature of the Provisional Treaty of Loo was received at Berlin with an outburst of rage, when it appeared that nearly all the aims and safeguards striven for by Ministers and Francophiles had disappeared. Further negotiations ensued at Berlin; but they brought no material change to the Loo compact. The treaty signed at Berlin by Hertzberg and Ewart on 13th August 1788 was defensive in character. Each State promised to help the other, in case of attack, by a force of 20,000 men; but Great Britain was not to use such a force of Prussians outside Europe or even at Gibraltar. That contingent might be increased if need arose; or it might be replaced by a money equivalent. As was stipulated at Loo, the two Powers pledged themselves to uphold the integrity of the United Provinces and of their present constitution, and to defend that State by all possible means, in case of attack, the Dutch also affording armed help to either ally, if it were attacked. Two secret articles were added to the Berlin Treaty, the one stipulating that no military aid should be given to the party attacked unless the latter had on foot at least 44,000 men; the second provided that a British fleet should assist Prussia if the latter applied for it.[1]

Thus was formed an imposing league. The splendid army of Prussia, backed by the fleets and resources of Great Britain and the Dutch Republic, constituted a force which during three years was to maintain peace and assure the future of the smaller States. If we remember the state of woeful isolation of England up to the summer of 1787, the contrast in her position a year later is startling. It came about owing to the caution of Pitt in a time when precipitate action would have marred everything. His wise delay in the early stages of the Dutch crisis, and his diplomatic coyness in the bargaining with Prussia are alike admirable.[2] The British envoys, Ewart and Harris (Keith at Vienna deserves also to be named) were men of unusual capacity and courage; but then as now success depended mainly on the chief; and it has been shown that the guiding hand at Whitehall was that of Pitt.

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[1] The secret articles are in Ranke's "Fürstenbund," ii, 358; for the published treaties of 13th June and 13th August see Martens, iv, 382-5, 390-3; for the negotiations, Luckwaldt, 114-16, Salomon, "Pitt," 344-51. The accounts of these important events given by Tomline, Stanhope, and Lecky are brief and unsatisfactory.

[2] So Wittichen, 148.

His diplomatic triumphs recorded in this chapter were to have a marked influence on the future of Europe. It is not generally known how acute was the danger arising from the schemes of Catharine II and Joseph II. In popular imagination the premonitory rumblings of the French Revolution rivet the attention of the world to the exclusion of all else; but a perusal of the letters of statesmen shows that nine-tenths of their time were given to thwarting the plans of the imperial revolutionists. In truth French democracy could not have gained its rapid and easy triumphs had not the monarchies of Central and Eastern Europe shaken the old order of things to its base, so that even the intelligent conservatism of Pitt failed to uphold the historic fabric from the attacks that came from the East and the West. Well was it for Great Britain that her diplomatic position was fully assured by the autumn of the year 1788. For at that time lunacy beset her monarch, paralyzed her executive government, and threatened to place her fortunes at the mercy of a dissolute prince.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PRINCE OF WALES

Our Ministers like gladiators live;
'Tis half their business blows to ward or give.
The good their virtue would effect, or sense,
Dies between exigents and self-defence.

POPE.

He [the Prince of Wales] has so effeminate a mind as to counteract his own good qualities, by having no control over his weaknesses.

THE EARL OF MALMESBURY, *Diaries*, iv, 33.

A PRIME Minister of Great Britain needs to be an intellectual Proteus. Besides determining the lines of foreign and domestic policy, he must regulate the movements of a complex parliamentary machine, ever taking into account personal prejudices which not seldom baffle the most careful forecast. It is not surprising, therefore, to find statesmen at Westminster often slow and hesitating even when there is need of prompt decision. The onlooker may see only the public questions at issue. The man in the thick of the maze may all the time be holding the personal clue which alone can bring him to the open. How often has the fate of Europe turned on the foibles or favouritism of Queen Elizabeth, Louis XIV, Queen Anne, Charles XII, Catharine II. In the present age this factor counts for less than of yore. Hence it comes about that many modern critics assess the career of Pitt as if he were in the position of a Gladstone. In point of fact he was more under royal control than Walpole or Godolphin. He had to do with a Sovereign who in the last resort gave the law to his Ministers, and occasionally treated them like head clerks.

True, George III interfered with Pitt less than with his predecessors. That masterful will had been somewhat tamed during the "bondage" to the Coalition, and almost perforce accepted the guidance of his deliverer. The King even allowed Pitt to go his own way respecting Reform, Warren Hastings, and the Irish Commercial Treaty. Family scandals and family debts for a time overshadowed all other considerations, a fact which goes far to explain the bourgeois domesticity of his outlook on Dutch affairs. In these years, then, he acquiesced in the lead of the heaven-sent Minister who maintained the national credit and the national honour. But in the last resort George III not only reigned but governed. Thus, apart from the Eastern War, which we shall consider later, everything portended a time of calm in the year 1788, when suddenly the personal element obtruded itself. There fell upon the monarch a strange malady which threatened to bring confusion in place of order, and to enthrone a Prince who was the embodiment of faction and extravagance.

The career of the Prince of Wales illustrates the connection often subsisting between the extremes of virtue and vice. Not seldom the latter may be traced to the excess of the former in some primly uninteresting home; and certainly the Prince, who saw the light on 12th August 1762, might serve to point the moral against pedantic anxiety on the part of the unco' guid. His upbringing by the strictest of fathers in the most methodized of households early helped to call out and strengthen the tendencies to opposition which seemed ingrained in the heirs-apparent of that stubborn stock. In the dull life at Kew or Windsor, bristling with rules and rebukes, may we not see the working in miniature of those untoward influences—fussy control and austere domination—which wearied out the patience of Ministers and the loyalty of colonists?

Moreover this royal precisian was not blessed with a gracious consort. Queen Charlotte's youthful experiences at the ducal Court of Mecklenburg predisposed her to strict control and unsparing parsimony. Many were the jests as to her stamping with her signet the butter left over at meals. It was even affirmed that apple charlottes owed their name to her custom of using up the spare crusts of every day. These slanders (for the latter story fails before the touchstone of the term *Charlotte Russe*) owed their popularity largely to her ugliness. One of her well-wishers, Colonel Disbrowe, once expressed to Croker the hope that the bloom of her ugliness was going off.[1] This sin revealed a multitude of others; and it is fairly certain that Queen Charlotte has been hardly judged. Some there were who accused her of callousness towards the King during his insanity; and the charge seems in part proven for the year 1804.[1] Others, again, charged her with unmotherly treatment of the Prince of Wales. Who can suffice for these things? Aristophanes coined a happy phrase to denote lovers of the trivial in politics. He calls them "buzzers-in-corners." Those who essay to write the life of a great statesman must avoid those nooks.

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[1] "Records of Stirring Times," 58, by the authoress of "Old Days in Diplomacy."

One thing is certain. The Prince of Wales grew to dislike both his father and mother. His temperament was far gayer and more romantic than theirs. Some imaginative persons have ventured to assert that a more generous and sympathetic training would have moulded him to a fine type of manhood. Undoubtedly his education was of the narrow kind which had stunted the nature of George III; and when the King, with ingrained obstinacy, continued to keep the trammels on the high-spirited youth of eighteen, he burst them asunder. At that age the Prince had his first amour (was it his first?), namely, with the actress, "Perdita" Robinson.[2] The gilded youth of London, long weary of the primness of Windsor, cheered him on to further excesses, and Carlton House set the tone of the age. In vain did the King seek to regain the confidence and affection of his son.[3] His efforts were repulsed; and the debasing influence of Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, inured the Prince to every kind of debauchery.

As if this were not enough, the heir to the throne made a bosom friend of the man whom his father most detested, Charles James Fox. Through that charming libertine the Prince became an *habitué* of the Whig Club, Brooks's;[4] and, as we have seen, he helped to defeat the King's eager electioneering in the great fight of 1784 at Westminster. Thenceforth the feud between father and son was bitter and persistent. The Prince had all his father's wilfulness, and far more than his stock of selfishness.

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[1] Certain letters of the Earl of Liverpool recently sold in London show that there was an open breach between King and Queen in 1804, and that Pitt helped to patch it up.

[2] Huish, "Mems. of George IV," i, 60-2.

[3] H. Walpole's "Last Journals," ii, 480-1.

[4] Fox does not seem to have *introduced* the prince into bad company. See Jesse, ii, 367-9, and Huish, i, 122-4.

So far as is known, he showed no sign of repentance, but argued himself into the belief that the King had always hated him from his seventh year onward.[1] There is nothing that corroborates this petulant assertion. The King had been a kind and even doting father, his chief fault being that of guiding too long and too closely this wayward nature.

By the summer of 1783 the quarrel had waxed warm on the subject of the immorality and extravagance of the Prince. At that time the Coalition Ministry startled the King by proposing to grant the sum of £100,000 a year to the Prince of Wales, exclusive of the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall, which amounted to about £13,000 a year.[2] The King, having formerly received far less than that amount, considered it exorbitant. As we saw in Chapter VI, the Ministry would probably have fallen had not the Prince required his favourite to waive the proposal. Parliament then voted £30,000 to pay his debts, £30,000 to start his new establishment (Carlton House) and £50,000 a year out of the Civil List.

By the autumn of the next year the Prince defiantly proposed to travel abroad in order to ease his finances by evading his creditors. This the King forbade, and requested him to send in a detailed list of his expenses and debts. The result was a statement clear enough in most items, but leaving a sum of £25,000 unaccounted for. The King required an explanation of this, which the Prince as firmly refused to give, though he assured Sir James Harris it was a debt of honour. As the King refused to pass this sum, the whole matter dragged on, until in April 1785 the debts reached the total of £160,000. To escape the discomforts of his position, the Prince proposed to his friend, Harris, who was then in London, a term of residence at The Hague. The true reason for this proposal lies in the fact that the Prince had for some time been desperately in love with a fair young widow, Mrs. Fitzherbert, who was a Roman Catholic. In vain had he wounded himself as a sign of his undying passion for her: in vain had four of his friends sought to inveigle her into a mock marriage. In order to escape his importunities she had fled to the Continent; and the King refused him permission to pursue her.

Here, in truth, was the crux of the relations between father and son. King George saw no hope for the youth but in marriage with a Protestant princess. Prince George as firmly declared that he would not marry "some German frow," and racked his brains with designs to secure the Roman Catholic of his choice. Mrs. Fitzherbert's religion, her position as a commoner, and the anomaly of a morganatic marriage in these islands, rendered any connection with her odious in the eyes of the King. Besides, the Royal Marriage Act of 1772 forbade the marriage of any prince or princess of the blood under the age of twenty-six without the consent of the King. On all sides, then, the King had the Prince in his toils.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 125.

[2] Pitt MSS., 228.

The Prince, realizing this fact, seems to have behaved as recklessly as possible in the hope of compelling the King to allow him to live abroad and marry Mrs. Fitzherbert. Such at least is the most charitable explanation of his early prodigalities. The debts, surely, were a means of forcing the hand of his father. But George was not to be gulled in this way. He, too, held firmly to his views, and the result was a hopeless deadlock. Pitt and Carmarthen sought to end it in May 1785. They threw out hints to Harris that the income of the Prince might be increased by Parliament if he would become reconciled to the King, cease to be a party man, and set about the discharge of his debts. Accordingly Harris waited on the Prince at Carlton House on 23rd May 1785, and suggested that on these conditions the Ministry would double his income, provided also that he set apart £50,000 a year for the discharge of his debts. To this the Prince demurred, on the ground that he could not desert Fox, and that the King's unfatherly hatred would be an obstacle to any such proposal. In support of the latter statement he requested Harris to read the King's letters to him, which were couched in severe terms, reprobating his extravagance and dissipation.

We cannot censure this severity. The gluttonous orgies of Carlton House were a public scandal, especially in hard times, when Parliament withheld the money necessary for the protection of Portsmouth and Plymouth. Both as a patriot and a father, George was justified in condemning his son's conduct; and it is clear that the hatred of the Prince for his father led him to put the worst possible construction on the advice from Windsor. At the close of his interview with Harris he declared vehemently that he never would marry, and that he had settled with his brother Frederick, Duke of York, for the Crown to devolve on his heirs.[1]

As illustrating the relations of father and son, I may quote an unpublished letter from Hugh Elliot to Pitt, dated Brighthelmstone, 17th October 1785, and endorsed by Pitt—"Shewn to the King."[2] In it Elliot states that he went to Brighton merely for bathing, but was soon honoured by the Prince's company and confidence. He had combated several of his prejudices, and this had not offended him; but the Prince asked him to discuss matters with the King's Ministers, who would then report to the King. He then adds:

> There is so much difficulty in putting upon paper the secret circumstances I have learnt, or in detailing the imminent danger to which H.R.H. is exposed from a manner of life that can be thoroughly understood only by those who are eye-witnesses of it, that, out of respect to the Prince, I shall be justified in not dwelling upon so distressing a subject, but that I may be allowed to advance, that in my opinion H.R.H. risks being lost to himself, his family and his country if a total and sudden change does not take place. I will even venture to add that the Prince is at this moment not insensible that such a change is necessary and that it is one of the motives which make him desirous of visiting the Continent under such restrictions as the King may think proper to advise.

Elliot adds that the Prince would travel only with Colonels Lee and Slaughter and himself, if the King and Pitt approved of his going with him. The Prince hoped to economize and so win back the good opinion of the King and country. He (Elliot) would rejoice if he could further this course.

The desire of the Prince for foreign travel ended with the return of Mrs. Fitzherbert from her secret tour. The Prince's pursuit of her now became more eager than ever, and he succeeded in inspiring her with feelings of love. Consequently, on 15th December 1785, he secretly married her, having four days previously assured his bosom friend, Fox, that there was no "ground for these reports which of late have been so malevolently circulated." It is now proved beyond possibility of doubt that the marriage was legal (except in the political sense above noticed), and that the Prince did his wife grievous wrong in persistently denying the fact.[1] She, with all the proofs in her possession, refrained from compromising him, and therefore had to endure endless slights. Many persons had the good sense to place her dignified silence far above his unblushing denials, and Society was rent in twain by the great question—"Was he married or not?" In view of these facts, is it desirable to present a full-length portrait of His Royal Highness? The wonder is that even in his Perdita days his name could ever be compared with the tenderest and most faithful of Shakespeare's lovers, Prince Florizel. That he allowed himself to be painted in that guise argues singular assurance. Was not Cloten more nearly his prototype?

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 129-31.

[2] Pitt MSS., 105.

It would be interesting to know whether the King and Queen were aware of the secret marriage. The Queen in a private interview pressed him to tell the truth; but he probably equivocated. Their action bespeaks perplexity. In private they treated Mrs. Fitzherbert kindly, but never received her at Court.[2] That Pitt was not ill-informed on the subject appears from the following hitherto unpublished letter from his brother, the Earl of Chatham. It is undated, but probably belongs to the month of December 1785:

Hanley, Wednesday.[3]

My Dear Brother,

I have had a good deal of conversation with Sir C—— on the subject you wished some information upon. The result of which leaves no doubt on my mind of the P[rince] having not only offered to marry Mrs. F., but taken measures towards its accomplishment. Many circumstances confirm this opinion, but this much is, I think, certain information, which is that the letters from the P. offering it were shown by himself to Mrs. S—— L——, the mother, from whom Sir Carnaby has it immediately, and the letter from Mrs. F. to her mother, in which she informs her of her consent. Sir C—— has seen an extract of, and is promised a copy ot [it], which I shall see. It must, however, I think, still remain very doubtful, till the step is absolutely taken, whether it ever will, or whether it is more than a last effort to gain her without; but

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[1] W. H. Wilkins, "Mrs. Fitzherbert and George IV," i, 81-105.

[2] *Ibid.*, i, 135-7; Langdale, "Mems. of Mrs. Fitzherbert," 127-8, 141, 142; Jesse, ii, 512, 513.

[3] Pitt MSS., 122. Sir Carnaby is Sir Carnaby Haggerston, who married Frances, the youngest sister of Mrs. Fitzherbert (*née* Smythe). Her mother was a daughter of John Errington of the Northumberland family of that name. His brother was the *confidante* of the Prince, as described above.

Sir C. and all her family seem perfectly convinced that he seriously and at all events intends it. They are averse to it; but the person in the P's confidence upon it and most employed in it is Mr. Errington, husband of Lady Broughton. He is supposed to be the person who is to go over as her relation to be present at the ceremony. I have endeavoured to learn what I cou'd as to the point of whether she wou'd change her religion or not. She at present says she will not; but Sir C—— seems to think that she might be brought to that whenever the marriage was declared. The present intention seems to be that it should be kept secret, but that, her conscience thus satisfied, she is to appear, and be received as, his mistress; and I believe it is pretty certain that he has a promise from a certain duchess to visit her and go about with her when she comes. . . .

Clearly the Earl of Chatham came very near the truth. Sir Carnaby Haggerston knew the secret, and chose to reveal a good deal of it. Mr. Errington was the bride's uncle, and gave her away at the secret ceremony at her house in Park Lane on 15th December.[1] The Duchess of Devonshire early recognized Mrs. Fitzherbert, and frequently entertained her along with the Prince.

The *liaison* with Mrs. Fitzherbert (for it was ostensibly nothing more) of course did not lessen expenses at Carlton House. The Prince insisted on her moving to a larger residence and entertaining on a lavish scale. As for Carlton House, it "exhibited a perpetual scene of excess, unrestrained by any wise superintendence."[2] It was therefore natural that the Prince's friends should ply Parliament with requests for larger funds in the spring of 1786. The matter came up, not inappropriately, during debates on the deficiency in the Civil List. That most brilliant of wits and most genial of boon companions, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, had now espoused the Prince's cause. With his customary charm he dragged in the subject of the monetary woes of his patron, pointing out that the dignity of the Crown demanded an ampler provision and the payment of the existing debts. Pitt replied that this matter was not before the House, and added that, as he had received no instructions on the subject, he would not be so presumptuous as to offer any private opinion on it.

Undeterred by this freezing rebuke to Sheridan, Fox on the next day raised the same question, maintaining that it was a national advantage for the Heir-Apparent to be able to live not merely in ease but in splendour. This patriotic appeal fell on deaf ears. The country gentlemen who on the score of expense had lately decided to leave Portsmouth and Plymouth open to attack, were not likely to vote away on the orgies of Carlton House an extra sum of £50,000 a year, which in fourteen years would have made the two great dockyard towns impregnable. Fox wisely refrained from pressing his demand, and vouchsafed no explanation as to how the nation would benefit from the encouragement of extravagance in Pall Mall.[1] Clearly the Prince's friends were in a hopeless minority. Accordingly he began more stoutly than ever to deny his marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert; but in such a case character counts for more than oaths and asseverations.

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[1] W. H. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, i, 97.

[2] Wraxall, iv, 306.

So the miserable affair dragged on. The King refused every request for help for the Prince, doubtless in the hope that debt would compel him to give up his mistress. The debts therefore grew apace, until in the summer of 1786 Carlton House was in danger of being seized by the brokers. It is clear that Pitt sided with the King. George III frequently commended him for his wise advice; but unfortunately nearly all the letters from Pitt to his sovereign, especially on this topic, long ago disappeared from the Library at Windsor, a highly suspicious circumstance. We know, however, that, as early as March and April 1785, the King approved the messages drawn up by Pitt from the Sovereign to the Prince. In general they seem to have been drafted by the Minister; and the following draft, in Pitt's writing, but dated by the King and with one slight correction, remains as proof that Pitt was the mouthpiece for the royal rebukes. It is endorsed "Draft of Letter from the King to the Prince of Wales":

WINDSOR; *July* 8, 1786.[2]

After so often repeating to the Prince of Wales the same sentiments on the subject of his applications, and with so little effect, I should add nothing further at present. But I must express my surprise at receiving a letter from him in which he states himself to be convinced that he has no reason to expect either at present or in future the smallest assistance from me. A reference to my last letter[1] and to the former correspondence might shew him what it was I expected before I could enter further on the consideration of the business. If he chooses to interpret what has passed into a refusal on my part to take measures in any case for his assistance, the consequence of his doing so can be imputed only to his own determination.[2]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 1348-56; Wraxall, iv, 304-6.

[2] Pitt MSS., 103. For other references see the King's letters to Pitt in "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies."

That the details of the expenditure at Carlton House were laid before Pitt is clear from the evidence contained in the Pitt Papers. The packet entitled "Prince of Wales's Debts," affords piquant reading. For, be it remembered, at the very time when Pitt was straining every nerve to lessen the National Debt, to rebuild the navy, and to enable England to look her enemies once more in the face, the Prince was squandering money on rare wines, on gilding, ormolu, and on jewellery for Mrs. Fitzherbert, £54,000 being considered a "not unreasonable bill" by her latest biographer.[3] An official estimate fixes the total expenditure of the Prince for the years 1784-86 at £369,977 (or at the rate of £123,000 a year) and yet there were "arrears not yet to hand." Parliament had voted £30,000 for the furnishing of Carlton House; but in 1787 the Prince consulted the welfare of the nation by accepting an estimate of £49,700 for extensions and decorations; and late in 1789 he sought still further to strengthen the monarchy by spending £110,500 on more splendours. They included "a new throne and State bed, furniture trimmed with rich gold lace, also new decorations in the Great Hall, a Chinese Drawing-Room, etc." The Pitt Papers contain no reference to the sums spent on the Pavilion at Brighton in the years 1785, 1786; but, even in its pre-oriental form, it afforded singular proof of the desire of the Prince for quiet and economy at that watering-place.

Much has been made of the retrenchments of July 1786, when the works on Carlton House were suspended, and the half of that palatial residence was closed. Whatever were the motives that prompted that new development, it soon ceased, as the foregoing figures have shown. The Prince's necessities being as great as ever, he found means to bring his case before Parliament in the debates of 20th, 24th, and 27th April 1787. Thereupon Pitt clearly hinted that the inquiry, if made at all, must be made thoroughly, and that he would in that case be most reluctantly driven "to the disclosure of circumstances which he should otherwise think it his duty to conceal." The House quivered with excitement at the untactful utterance—one of Pitt's few mistakes in Parliament. Sheridan, with his usual skill and daring, took up the challenge and virtually defied Pitt to do his worst. Pitt thereupon declared that he referred solely to pecuniary matters.

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[1] The King altered this to "written message."

[2] Pitt MSS., 105.

[3] W. H. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, i, 161.

Everyone, however, knew that the Fitzherbert question was really at stake; and the general dislike to any discussion, even on the debts, was voiced by the heavy Devonshire squire, who was to find immortality in the "Rolliad." Rolle asserted on 27th April that any such debate would affect the constitution both in Church and State. Undaunted by Sheridan's salvos of wit, he stuck to his guns, with the result that on the 30th Fox fired off a seemingly crushing discharge. As Sheridan had declared that the Prince in no wise shrank from the fullest inquiry, the Whig chieftain now solemnly assured the House that the reported marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert was a low and malicious calumny. When the tenacious Devonian plied him with the final inquiry whether he spoke from direct authority, Fox replied with the utmost emphasis that he did.

We now know that Fox had been cruelly deceived by the Prince. But in that age the assertion of Fox was considered as almost final, save by those who marked the lofty scorn poured by Mrs. Fitzherbert on her unwitting traducer. In Parliament the victory lay with the Prince; but even there Rolle firmly refused to comply with Sheridan's challenging request and declare himself satisfied. To the outside world it was clear that either the heir to the throne or Fox had lied.

The letters of George III to Pitt in May 1787 and Pitt's suggestions for a settlement of the dispute, show that the perturbed monarch placed absolute confidence in his Minister. Very noteworthy is the King's assertion that there could be no reconciliation until his son consented to marry and to retrench his expenditure. His letter of 20th May 1787 to Pitt further proves that the proposal to add £10,000 to the Prince's income emanated from Pitt, and was acquiesced in somewhat reluctantly by the King.[1]

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[1] This letter refutes the statement of Huish (*op. cit.*, i, 169) that Pitt was as pertinacious as the King in refusing to help the Prince.

This expedient brought about a partial reconciliation between father and son. On the strong recommendation of Pitt, Parliament allowed the extra £10,000 a year, besides granting £20,000 on behalf of the new works at Carlton House, and paying £161,000 towards the extinction of the Prince's debts, on his express assurance that he would not exceed his income in the future. The vote was unanimous. Thereupon the King waived the question of the Prince's marriage; so at least we may infer from the fact that they had a long interview on 25th May 1787 at the Queen's House (Buckingham House), at the close of which the Prince proceeded to greet his mother and sisters. The parents had few happier days than that; and their joy was crowned a little later by the return of Frederick, Duke of York, after a long residence in Germany. Fanny Burney describes the radiant gladness of the King and Queen as they paced along the terrace at Windsor with their soldier son; and the inhabitants of the royal city crowded to witness the pleasing scene. It speaks well for the Prince of Wales, that he posted off from Brighton on the news of his brother's home-coming, in order to double the pleasure of his parents. For a time, too, the Prince thought more kindly of Pitt; so we may infer from the statement of St. Leger to the Marquis of Buckingham that his feelings towards him had altered since the negotiation on the subject of his debts.[1] But these sentiments of gratitude soon vanished along with the virtuous and economical mood of which they were the outcome. Those who break their word naturally hate the man to whom they had pledged it.

In the winter of 1787-8 the two Princes again abandoned themselves to drinking and gambling. The dead set made against Pitt over the Warren Hastings trial and Indian affairs so far weakened his position that the Princes counted on his fall and hoped for the advent to power of the Fox-Sheridan clique. Certain it is that they drank and played very deep. General Grant, writing to Cornwallis, 6th April 1788, says:

> The Prince [of Wales] has taught the Duke [of York] to *drink* in the most liberal and copious way; and the Duke in return has been equally successful in teaching his brother to lose his money at all sorts of play—*Quinze*, Hazard, &c—to the amount, as we are told, of very large sums

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 362.

in favour of India General Smith[1] and Admiral Pigot who both wanted it very much. These play parties have chiefly taken place at a new club formed this winter by the Prince of Wales in opposition to Brooks's, because Tarleton and Jack Payne, proposed by H.R.H., were blackballed.[2]

At this new club, called the Dover House or Welzie's club, the Prince often won or lost £2,000 or £3,000 at a sitting. In other ways Frederick sought to better his brother's example, so that his company was thought *mauvais ton* by young nobles.[3]

Compared with these buffooneries, political opposition was a small matter. But the King deeply resented the nagging tactics of his son at any time of crisis. Such a time came in March 1788, when a sharp dispute arose between Pitt and the East India Company. It originated in the Dutch troubles of the previous summer. The prospect of war with France was so acute that the India Board sent out four regiments in order to strengthen the British garrisons in India. At the time the Directors of the Company fully approved of this step; but when the war-cloud blew over, they objected to pay the bill. Pitt insisted that the India Act of 1784 made them liable for the transport of troops when the Board judged it necessary; and in February 1788 he brought in a Declaratory Bill to that effect.

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[1] Major-General Smith, M.P., was twice unseated for bribery. His nickname was "Hyder Ali."

[2] "Cornwallis Corresp.," i, 374, 375. Payne was a confidential friend of the Prince, who made him Comptroller of his Household and Lord Warden of the Stanneries in Cornwall.

[3] "Buckingham P.," i, 363, 364.

In the Pitt MSS., 228, is a Memorandum, endorsed January 1794, entitled "Heads of a Plan for a new Arrangement of the Prince of Wales's Affairs." It states that his debts then amounted to £412,511 5*s*. 8*d*; he owed £60,000 to Mr. Coutts the banker (Pitt's banker); and he might at any time be called on to pay as much as £170,000. It would be difficult to induce Parliament to pay any part of these debts. Moreover, such a demand "would afford a fresh topic of declamation to those who already use the expenses of Royalty as an engine to operate upon weak minds in order to effectuate their ultimate purpose, the overthrow of everything dignified, everything sacred, everything valuable and respectable in social life." The anonymous compiler therefore suggests the raising of a loan at 3½ per cent., so as to cover the "urgent" debts amounting to £349,511. Creditors would probably consent to the "defalcation" of 20 per cent. from what was owed them and be content with 3½ per cent. interest on the remainder.

A Mr. W. Fitzwilliam, of 45, Sloane Street, in May 1795 suggested a lottery for raising £2,100,000, of which £650,000 should go to the discharge of the Prince's debts, £1,000,000 to the archbishops for the forming of a fund for raising the stipend of every clergyman to £100 a year; £100,000 to be reserved as prizes in the lottery; and £50,000 to be set apart for expenses.

At once the Company flung to the winds all sense of gratitude to its saviour, and made use of the men who four years previously had sought its destruction. Fox and Erskine figured as its champions, and the Prince of Wales primed the latter well with brandy before he went in to attack Pitt. The result was a lamentable display of Billingsgate, of which Pitt took no notice, and the Ministry triumphed by 242 against 118 (3rd March).

But the clamour raised against the measure had more effect two nights later, when Fox dared Pitt to try the case in a court of law. Instead of replying, Pitt feebly remarked that he desired to postpone his answer to a later stage of the debates. This amazing torpor was ascribed to a temporary indisposition; but only the few were aware that the Prime Minister had drunk deeply the previous night at the Marquis of Buckingham's house in Pall Mall in the company of Dundas and the Duchess of Gordon—that spirited lady whose charms are immortalized in the song, "Jenny o' Menteith."[1] Wit and joviality were now replaced by a heaviness that boded ill for the Ministry, whose majority sank to fifty-seven. Two days later, however, Pitt pulled himself and his party together, accepted certain amendments relating to patronage, but crushed his opponents on the main issue. To the annoyance of the Prince of Wales and Fox, the Government emerged triumphant from what had seemed to be certain disaster. Wraxall never wrote a truer word than when he ascribed Pitt's final triumph to his character. Even in his temporary retreat he had commanded respect, so that Burke, who hurried up exultingly from the Warren Hastings trial, was fain to say that the Prime Minister scattered his ashes with dignity and wore his sackcloth like a robe of purple.

The prestige of the Ministry shone once more with full radiance on the Budget night (5th May 1788). Pitt pointed out that the past year had been a time of exceptional strain. The Dutch crisis and the imminence of war with France had entailed preparations which cost nearly £1,200,000. The relief of the Prince of Wales absorbed in all £181,000. The sum of £7,000,000 had been expended in the last four years on improvements in the naval service. He had raised no loan and imposed no new taxes. Nevertheless, the sum of £2,500,000 had been written off from the National Debt, and even so, there was a slight surplus of £17,000. The condition of the finances of France supplied the Minister with a telling contrast. It was well known that despite many retrenchments, the deficit amounted to £2,300,000. In these financial statements we may discern the cause of the French Revolution and of the orderly development of England.

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[1] "Buckingham P.," i, 361; Wraxall, iv, 458; v, 77-9.

In vain did Fox and Sheridan seek to dissipate the hopes aroused by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. So experienced a financier as Pulteney justified his statement, and the country at large felt assured of the advent of a time of abounding prosperity. As for France, the inability of her statesmen, even of Necker, to avert the crisis caused by reckless borrowing and stupid taxation, seemed to be the best possible guarantee for peace. Pitt's concern at the re-appointment of Necker in August 1788 appears in a letter to Grenville in which he describes it as almost the worst event that could happen—a curious remark which shows how closely he connected the power of a State with its financial prosperity.[1] Thus the year 1788 wore on, with deepening gloom for France, and with every appearance of calm and happiness for the Island Power, until a mysterious malady struck down the King and involved everything in confusion.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 353. Grenville replied on 1st September that he thought the frequent changes in France would undermine her power and so check "that sort of intrigue and restlessness which keeps us in hot water even while we are most confident of the impossibility of any serious effect from their schemes." He then suggests an agreement as to the forces to be kept by the two Powers in the East (Pitt MSS., 140).

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REGENCY CRISIS

Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair
That thou wilt needs invest thee with mine honours
Before the hour be ripe?

SHAKESPEARE, *Henry IV*, *Part II.*

The line which bounded the royal prerogative, though in general sufficiently clear, had not everywhere been drawn with accuracy and distinctness.—MACAULAY.

THE causes of insanity are generally obscure. In the case of George III the disease cannot be traced to a progenitor, nor did it descend to his issue, unless the moral perversity of his sons be regarded as a form of mental obliquity. It is highly probable that the conduct of the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York produced in their father a state of nervous tension conducive to, if not the actual cause of, madness. No proof of this is possible; but having regard to the King's despotic temper, his love of plain living, and his horror of gambling and debauchery, we may plausibly refer to a private cause the sudden breakdown of a strong constitution at a time when public affairs had become singularly calm.

Throughout the summer of 1788 he became steadily weaker. A stay at Cheltenham was of no avail. Indeed, an enemy of that place tried to assign the King's malady solely to its waters. The King had to forego the long walks and rides which had formerly tired out all his suite; and in October he returned to Kew much aged and broken. Nevertheless the indomitable will asserted itself in one curious detail. He always remained standing during interviews with his Ministers; and he is stated by George Rose to have kept on his feet for three hours and forty minutes during a portentous interview with Pitt, which must have strained his strength to the breaking point.[1] At the levee of 24th October at St. James's, he made a praiseworthy effort to appear well in order "to stop further lies and any fall of the stocks." But the effort was too great, as Pitt perceived afterwards during a private interview.

Nevertheless, on the following day the King removed to Windsor. There the decline in health continued, so that, after attending a hunt, he exclaimed to Lady Effingham: "My dear Effy, you see me all at once an old man."[2] Even so he continued his correspondence with Pitt much as usual, until on 5th November there came a sudden collapse.

Again we have to confess ignorance as to the final cause. Mrs. Papendiek, wife of the royal barber, ascribes it to the King's annoyance at the endeavour of the Duke of York to introduce Turkish military instruments into the band of the Guards. Rose mentions a discussion with the Duke at dinner on the 5th, relative to a murder. All, however, are agreed that the merest trifles had long sufficed to make the King flurried and angry, as had frequently appeared during the drives with the princesses. This peculiarity now suddenly rose to the point where madness begins. It is even said that at that dinner he without provocation suddenly rushed at the Prince of Wales, pinned him to the wall, and dared him to contradict the King of England. The Prince burst into tears, the Queen became hysterical, and it was with some difficulty that the King was induced to retire to his room. During that evening and night he raved incessantly, and the chief physician, Sir George Baker, feared for his life. A curious incident is mentioned by Mrs. Papendiek. She avers that on the following night the King arose, took a candle, and went to look at the Queen as she slept. She awoke in an agony of terror, whereupon he soothed her and seemed to take comfort himself. We may doubt the authenticity of the incident, as also the correctness of Mrs. Papendiek's narrative when she describes the offensive air of authority which the Prince of Wales at once assumed, his demand of an interview with the Queen, even on political affairs, and his striking the floor with his stick to express displeasure.[1]

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[1] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 86. The date of this interview is probably between 10th and 24th October 1788.

[2] "Fanny Burney's Diary," iv, 122. In a rare pamphlet, "A History of the Royal Malady," by a Page of the Presence (1789), it is stated that the King, while driving in Windsor Park, alighted and shook hands with a branch of an oak tree, asserting it to be the King of Prussia, and was with difficulty persuaded to remount.

It is certain, however, that the behaviour of the Prince was far from seemly. He took the direction of affairs in the palace with an abruptness which caused the Queen much pain. "Nothing was done but by his orders," wrote Miss Burney; "the Queen interfered not in anything. She lived entirely in her two new rooms, and spent the whole day in patient sorrow and retirement with her daughters." Worst of his acts, perhaps, was the taking possession of the King's papers, a proceeding which his apologists pass over in discreet silence. Among those documents, we may note, were several which proved that Pitt had not seldom drafted the royal rebukes. In other respects the exultation of the Prince at least wore the veil of decency, therein comparing favourably with the joy coarsely expressed by his followers at Brooks's Club.[2]

Secret intrigues for assuring the triumph of the Whigs began at once. It is significant that that veteran schemer, the Lord Chancellor, Thurlow, proceeded to Windsor on 6th November, at the Prince's command, and dined and supped with him. The ostensible object of their meeting was to consider the mode of treating His Majesty, who had been violent during the night.[3] But the design of the Prince was to detach from Pitt the highest legal authority in the land. To this he was instigated by Captain Payne, Comptroller of his Household, who wrote to Sheridan that Thurlow would probably take this opportunity of breaking with his colleagues, if they proposed to restrict the powers of the Regent.[4] Payne augured correctly. Thurlow had his scruples as to such a betrayal; but they vanished at the suggestion that he should continue in his high office under the forthcoming Whig Ministry.

This bargain implied the shelving of Lord Loughborough, who for five years had attached himself to the Whigs in the hope of gaining the woolsack. Had Fox been in England, it is unlikely that he would have sanctioned this betrayal of a friend in order to gain over an enemy. But, with Sheridan as go-between, and the Prince as sole arbiter, the bargain was soon settled. Light has been thrown on these events by the publication of the Duchess of Devonshire's Diary. In it she says: "He [Sheridan] cannot resist playing a sly game: he cannot resist the pleasure of acting alone; and this, added to his natural want of judgment and dislike of consultation frequently has made him commit his friends and himself."[1] Perhaps it was some sense of the untrustworthiness of Sheridan which led Fox, in the midst of a Continental tour with Mrs. Armstead, to return from Bologna at a speed which proved to be detrimental to his health. After a journey of only nine days, he arrived in London on the 24th. It was too late to stop the bargain with Thurlow, and he at once informed Sheridan that he had swallowed the bitter pill and felt the utmost possible uneasiness about the whole matter.[2]

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[1] "Court and Private Life in the Time of Queen Charlotte," by Mrs. Papendiek. 2 vols. (1887); vol. ii, *ad init.*

[2] "Buckingham P.," i, 342.

[3] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 87.

[4] T. Moore, "Life of Sheridan," ii, 27, where Payne also suggests that Sheridan should question Pitt about the public amusements, as it would embarrass him "either way."

The Whigs now had a spy in the enemy's citadel. At first Pitt was not aware of the fact. The holding of several Cabinet meetings at Windsor, for the purpose of sifting the medical evidence, enabled Thurlow to hear everything and secretly to carry the news to the Prince. Moreover, his grief on seeing the King—at a time when the Prince's friends knew him to be at his worst[3]—was so heartrending that some beholders were reminded of the description of the player in "Hamlet":

> Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
> A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
> With forms to his conceit.

Such at least was the judgement of the discerning few, who, with Fanny Burney, saw more real grief in the dignified composure of Pitt after that inevitably painful interview. Authority to "inspect" the royal patient was entrusted to Thurlow, who thus stood at the fountain head of knowledge. Yet these astute balancings and bargainings were marred by the most trivial of accidents. After one of the Cabinet Councils at Windsor, Ministers were about to return to town, when Thurlow's hat could not be found. Search was made for it in vain in the council chamber, when at last a page came up to the assembled

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[1] W. Sichel, "Sheridan," ii, 400.

[2] T. Moore, "Life of Sheridan," ii, 31-5; Campbell, "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," vii, 248, 239 (edit. of 1857).

[3] T. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 29

Ministers and exclaimed with boyish frankness: "My Lord, I found it in the cabinet of His Royal Highness." The flush which spread over the Chancellor's wrinkled visage doubled the effect of the boy's unconscious home-thrust.[1]

The question of the Regency has often been discussed on abstract constitutional grounds. Precedents were at once hunted up, namely, those of the years, 1326, 1377, 1422, and 1455, the last being considered on a par with the present case. But of course the whole question turned primarily on the probability of the King's recovery. Here it should be noted that George III had been afflicted by a mental malady for a few weeks in the year 1765, and that a Regency Bill was drafted but the need for it vanished.[2] This fact was not widely known, but it must have come to the knowledge of the Prince of Wales. In view of the sound constitution and regular life of the King, there were good grounds for hoping that he would a second time recover.

Nevertheless, the reports of Sir George Baker, on behalf of Dr. Warren and the other physicians, as sent to Pitt, were at first discouraging. As they have not before been published it will be well to cite them here almost *in extenso* from the Pitt Papers, No. 228. They are dated from the Queen's Lodge, Windsor:

> *Nov.* 6. 9 o'clock:—Sir George Baker presents his comp^{ts} to Mr. Pitt. He is very sorry to inform Mr. Pitt that the King's delirium has continued through the whole day. There seems to be no prospect at present of a change either for the better or worse. H.M. is now rather in a quiet state. *Nov.* 8, 1788. 8 o'clock:—The dose of James's powder which the King had taken before Mr. Pitt left Windsor produced a gentle perspiration but no diminution of the delirium; a second dose taken six hours after the first, is now operating in the same manner but with as little effect upon the delirium. *Nov.* 10, 1788. 8 p.m.:—H.M. has but little fever, is very incoherent, but without vehemence or bodily efforts, though his strength appears to be very little impaired. *Nov.* 12, 1788:—H.M. talked in a quiet but incoherent way the whole night and is this morning just as he was yesterday. He has eaten a very good breakfast. *Nov.* 15, 1788. 10 p.m.:—H.M. has been deranged the whole day, in a quiet and apparently happy way to himself. *Nov.* 16.

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[1] Campbell, *op cit.*, p. 251, who had the story from Thomas Grenville. See, too, Wilberforce, i, 386, 387.

[2] Dr. W. Hunt, "Political Hist. of England," x, 64-5.

10 a.m.:—This morning his discourse was consistent, but the principle upon which it went for the most part founded in error. *Nov.* 18, 10 a.m.:—H.M. had a good night, but the disorder remains unabated. *Nov.* 21:—H.M. has been . . . more than once under the influence of considerable irritation. *Nov.* 22. 10 a.m.:—H.M. is entirely deranged this morning in a quiet good humoured way. *Nov.* 22:—H.M. shewed many marks of a deluded imagination in the course of the day. In the evening he was more consistent.

[A letter follows from the Queen, that she consents to the calling in Dr. Addington.]

Nov. 24, 1788:—His Majesty passed the whole day in a perfectly maniacal state.[1] *Nov.* 25, 1788:—His Majesty was not enraged nor surprised at the strict regimen under which he was put at 5 o'clock this evening, but grew quieter and went to bed at 9 o'clock, and is now asleep.

From the outset Pitt viewed the case with grave concern, but by no means hopelessly. This will appear from the following new letters of Pitt, the former to Bishop Pretyman (Tomline), the latter to the Marquis of Buckingham:

Sunday, *Nov.* 10, [1788].[2]

My Dear Bishop,

You will have heard enough already of the King's illness to make you very uneasy. The fact is that it has hitherto found little relief from medicine, and, what is worst of all, it is attended with a delirium the cause of which the physicians cannot clearly ascertain. On the whole there is some room to apprehend the disorder may produce danger to his life, but there is no immediate symptom of danger at present. The effect more to be dreaded is on the understanding. If this lasts beyond a certain time it will produce the most difficult and delicate crisis imaginable in making provision for the Government to go on. It must, however, be yet some weeks before that can require decision, but the interval will be a truly anxious one. . . .

[Private.]

Downing Street, *Nov.* 15, 1788.[3]

My dear Lord,

I have not half time [*sic*] to thank you sufficiently for your very kind and affectionate letter, and for the communication thro'

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[1] This letter fixes the date of Pitt's letter to Grenville, headed merely "Tuesday morning," in "Dropmore P." (i, 361). Pitt quotes the phrase "perfectly maniacal," and adds "I begin to fear the physicians have been more in the right than we thought."

[2] Pretyman MSS.

[3] Chevening MSS.

Grenville. You will learn from him that our last accounts begin to wear rather a more favourable aspect, tho' there is not yet ground for very confident hope. There is certainly now no danger to his life, but the other alternative, which there was some danger to apprehend, was, if possible, more distressing. It seems now possible that a total recovery may take place, but even on the best supposition there must still be a considerable interval of anxiety. . . .

Grenville, a man of singularly calm and equable temperament (which procured for him the Speakership of the House of Commons on the decease of Cornwall early in the next year) waxed indignant as he described to his brother the tactics of the Opposition. On 20th November he declared: "The Opposition have been taking inconceivable pains to spread the idea that his [the King's] disorder is incurable. Nothing can exceed Warren's indiscretion on this subject."[1] The conviction gained ground that the Royal physicians were in league with the Prince; and so high did feeling run that shouts were flung at them—"So much the worse for you if he does not recover." This exasperation of spirit waxed apace as the jubilation of the Prince's friends became insolently patent. Indeed more terrible than the lunacy itself was the spectacle of the intrigues to which it gave rise.

As the reports privately sent to Pitt by the physicians were far from hopeless, he determined to await developments as long as possible before taking any decided step. On 12th November he proposed to the Prince of Wales that Parliament, instead of meeting in the following week, should be adjourned for a fortnight, to which there came a ready assent.[2] On the 17th he asked leave to inform the Prince of what he proposed to do on the meeting of Parliament, but an interview was not accorded. Eight days later the Prince inquired whether he had any proposal to make, but was answered by a polite negative. The uneasy truce between them evidently neared its end.

In his resolve to sift to the bottom the nature of the disease and the probability of a cure, Pitt advised the calling in of his father's doctor, Addington, and he carried his point. On the 28th and 29th the Prime Minister himself saw the Monarch, who was pleased to see him, referred to questions discussed at their last interview, and showed incoherence chiefly in wandering incessantly from one topic to another,[1] a characteristic of the converse of polite Society, which, if judged severely, would warrant the consignment to Bedlam of half of its most cherished talkers.

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[1] "Buckingham P.," ii, 9.

[2] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 87.

All observers are agreed that the King conversed quite rationally at times, as was also the case in the attack of 1804.[2] Pitt therefore resolved to do nothing which would distress the King in the event of his recovery. This it was which led him to decline all idea of a coalition with the Whigs, and to insist on restricting the authority of the Regent in regard to personal matters on which the King laid stress. The removal of the monarch to Kew House seems to have been the wish of the Prince as well as of the Cabinet; and it took place without mishap on 29th November.

Six days later Parliament re-assembled, and rarely has it had to face problems so novel and delicate. In contrast with other nations, England had been singularly free from the perplexities attendant on a Regency; but now she had to face them in an acute form. The monarch was not unpopular, and his heir was distrusted. Yet it was indisputable that, as Regent, he could choose his own Ministers; and his hatred of Pitt implied the dismissal of that Minister and the triumph of Sheridan, Fox, and the roystering set at Brooks's. Pitt felt little doubt on this point and calmly prepared to resume his practice at the Bar. The sequel must have been a sharp conflict between the Prince's friends and the nation; so that the fateful year 1789 would have seen the growth of a political crisis, less complex than that of France, it is true, but fully as serious as that from which the nation was saved by his timely decease in the summer of the year 1830. All this was at stake, and much more. For who shall measure the worth to the nation of the frugal and virtuous life of George III, and who can count up the moral losses inflicted on the national life by his son in his brief ascendancy?

The King's physicians having been examined by the Privy Council on 3rd December, their evidence was laid before Parliament on the following day. While differing at many points, they agreed that recovery was possible or even probable, but they could not assign a limit of time. Adopting a suggestion of Fox,

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[1] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 90.

[2] *Ibid.*, 94; "Buckingham P.," i, 446; "Quarterly Rev.," cv, 490.

Pitt moved for the appointment of a Committee of the House for the examination of the physicians. It comprised twenty-one members selected from two lists suggested by the Ministry and the Opposition. The reading out of the final list led to a singular scene. Not much comment was made on the twenty names, but before reading out the last name, Pitt paused for a moment. At once the Opposition raised cries of "Burke." Still Pitt remained silent. The cries were renewed more loudly. He then very quietly proposed Lord Gower. Burke threw himself back in his seat, crossed his arms violently, and kicked his heels with evident discomposure.[1] The annoyance of the great Irishman was natural, as Pitt had evidently prepared to inflict the slight. The Upper House appointed a similar committee.

The report based on this inquiry was presented by Pitt to the House of Commons on the 10th. It comprised the evidence, not only of the royal physicians, but also of an outsider, the Rev. Dr. Francis Willis who, during twenty-eight years had supervised some 900 cases of lunacy at his residence near Boston. Everyone admitted his success in this trying work, which may be ascribed to the influence of a commanding personality, and the firm and judicious treatment which he substituted for the frequently violent methods then in vogue. He at once pronounced the case far from hopeless; and, if we may trust the stories told of the King and his new physician, there was even at the outset very much of method in the madness. Thus, on being informed that Willis was a clergyman, the patient remarked that he could not approve of his taking to the practice of medicine. This drew from Willis the remark that Christ went about healing the sick, whereupon the retort at once followed—"Yes; but I never heard that he had £700 a year for doing so." The acuteness of the King's faculties also appears in his remark that a letter which he had written to the Queen would not reach her, as his recent missive to the Duke of York had not been answered. Thereupon Willis offered to take it himself, and caused great joy to the sufferer by bringing back an affectionate letter in reply.

Yet the King soon felt the domination of his will. This appeared when the royal patient refused to go to bed. As the King petulantly resisted, Willis raised his voice in commanding tones which ensured complete submission. The trust which

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[1] "Bland Burges Papers," 118.

Willis reposed in the King led him to lengths that were sharply censured. When the sufferer expressed a desire to shave himself and complained that a razor and even a knife had been withheld from him, Willis at once replied that he was sure His Majesty had too strong a sense of what he owed to God and man to make an improper use of it. He therefore brought a razor, and kept the monarch under his eye until the growth of five weeks was removed. This tactful treatment speedily wrought a marked change. Willis was far more sanguine than the other attendants.[1] In his evidence before the Committee on 9th December, he stated that the irritation was already subsiding, and that nine-tenths of his patients who had been similarly afflicted recovered, generally within three months from their first seizure.[2]

Willis's words aroused the liveliest hopes. In vain did the Prince's party and the physicians scoff at the assurance of the "quack" or "interloper." The Queen and the nation believed in Willis; and his report greatly strengthened Pitt's hands in dealing with the Regency. The more we know of the motives that influenced votes in Parliament the more we see that they turned on the opinions of the doctors. The desertion of the Duke of Queensberry to the Prince's party was due to a long conversation which he had at Windsor with the pessimistic Dr. Warren.[3]

The conduct of the Prime Minister was cautious and tentative. On 10th December, after presenting the medical evidence, he moved the appointment of a committee to investigate precedents. At once Fox started to his feet and poured forth a vehement remonstrance. What need was there for such an inquiry? It was merely a pretext for delay. The heir-apparent was of mature age and capacity. He had as clear a right to take the reins of government and to exercise the sovereign power during the King's illness as he would have in case of death. Parliament had only to determine when he had the right to exercise it; and as short a time as possible should elapse before the Prince assumed the sovereignty.

Here, as so often, Fox marred his case by his impetuosity. Pitt watched him narrowly, and remarked exultantly to his neighbour: "I'll *un-Whig* the gentleman for the rest of his life." With eyes flashing defiance, he denounced his assertions of the right of the Prince to assume the Regency as a breach of the constitution, implying as they did that the House could not even deliberate on the question. They must therefore in the first place assert their own rights.

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[1] See his private reports to Pitt in "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies."

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 697, gives the period as three months; "Buckingham P.," ii, 47, gives it (erroneously, I think) as five months.

[3] Wraxall, v, 243.

Fox at once rose, not to soften, but to emphasize his previous statements. He questioned whether Parliament had the power of legislating at all until the royal power were made good. Now that the King had been admitted to be incapable, their assembly was a Convention, not a Parliament. He next asserted that the Regency belonged of right to the Prince of Wales during the civil death of the King; and "that it could not be more legally his by the ordinary and natural demise of the Crown." This was tantamount to saying that English law recognized lunacy as death, in which case an heir could at once possess the property of a lunatic father, and a wife be divorced from an insane husband. Of course this is not so.[1] Fox concluded by asserting that, if Parliament arrogated to itself the power of nominating the Regent, it would act "contrary to the spirit of the constitution and would be guilty of treason."

Pitt, on the contrary, affirmed that the Prince had no such claim to the Regency as would supersede the right of either House to deliberate on the subject. He even ventured on the startling assertion that apart from the decision of Parliament "the Prince of Wales had no more right (speaking of strict right) to assume the government than any other individual subject of the country."[2] This phrase is generally quoted without the qualifying clause, which materially alters it. Pitt surely did not mean to deny the priority of the claim of the Prince, but rather to affirm the supreme authority of Parliament; the statement, however was undeniably over-strained. In the main he carried the House with him. In vain did Burke declaim against Pitt, styling him a self-constituted competitor with the Prince. "Burke is Folly personified," wrote Sir William Young on 22nd December, "but shaking his cap and bells under the laurel of genius."[3] The sense of the House was clearly with the Prime Minister, and the committee of inquiry was appointed.

At the outset, then, Fox and his friends strained their contentions to breaking-point. In a technical sense their argument could be justified by reference to the dead past; but they were out of touch with the living present. Fox himself had admitted that no precedent could be found for this problem. A practical statesman would therefore have sought to adapt the English constitution (which is a growing organism, not a body of rigid rules) to the needs of the present crisis. By his eager declarations he left this course open for Pitt to take; and that great parliamentarian took it with masterly power. He resolved to base his case on the decisions arrived at in the Revolution of a century earlier which had affirmed the ascendancy of Parliament in all questions relating to a vacancy in the Crown or a disputed succession. Men said that he was becoming a Republican, and Fox a Tory.[1] Fortunately he had to do with singularly indiscreet opponents. After Fox had prejudiced the Prince's cause, Sheridan rushed in to mar its prospects still further. In the debate of 12th December he ventured to remind Pitt of the danger of provoking the assertion of the Prince's claim to the Regency. Never did Sheridan's hatred of Pitt betray him into a more disastrous blunder.[2] His adversary at once turned it to account:

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[1] May, "Constitutional Hist.," i, 148.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 709.

[3] "Buckingham P.," ii, 71.

> I have now [he said] an additional reason for asserting the authority of the House and defining the boundaries of "Right," when the deliberative faculties of Parliament are invaded and an indecent menace is thrown out to awe and influence our proceedings. In the discussion of the question I trust the House will do its duty in spite of any threat that may be thrown out. Men who feel their native freedom will not submit to a threat, however high the authority from which it may come.[3]

We must here pause in order to notice the allegations of Mr. Lecky against Pitt. That distinguished historian asserted that the conduct of the Prime Minister towards the Prince "was from the first as haughty and unconciliatory as possible"; he claims that the plan of a Regency should have been submitted to the Prince before it was laid before Parliament; further, that, in defiance of the expressed wish of the Prince, "Pitt insisted on bringing the question of the Prince's right to a formal issue and obtaining a vote denying it."[1] It is difficult to see on what grounds this indictment rests. Surely it was the duty of the Privy Council and Parliament first to hear the medical evidence and to decide whether the need for the Regency existed. That was the purport of the debate of 10th December, the details of which prove conclusively that it was Fox who first, and in a most defiant way, brought up the question of the Prince's right to assume the Regency. Pitt, in a temperate and non-committal speech, had moved for a "Committee of Inquiry," whereupon the Whig leader flung down the gauntlet for the Prince; and two days later Sheridan uttered his threat.[2] Their auditors must have inferred that they acted with the sanction of Carlton House. In any case, the Prince's friends, not Pitt, provoked the conflict. When the glove was twice cast down, the Prime Minister could do nothing else but take it up and insist on having that question disposed of; otherwise Parliament might as well have dissolved outright. We may admit, however, that the intemperate conduct of Fox and Sheridan led Pitt to assert the authority of Parliament with somewhat more stringency than the case warranted.

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[1] Sichel, "Sheridan," ii, 415.

[2] So thought the Duchess of Devonshire's friends. Sichel, "Sheridan," ii, 416.

[3] T. Moore, "Life of Sheridan," ii, 42, 43; "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 730, 731.

To the contention, that the Prince ought first to have been consulted on the proposed measure, I may reply that such a course would have implied his right to dictate his terms to Parliament; and that was the very question which Pitt wished to probe by the Committee of Inquiry. Further, the historian's assertion, that Pitt laid the Regency plan before Parliament before submitting it to the Prince, is disproved by the contents of Pitt's letter of 15th December, published in full by Bishop Tomline.[3] In it the Prime Minister expressed his regret that his words and intentions had been misrepresented to His Royal Highness; for on several occasions he had offered to wait on him but had received an answer that he (the Prince) had no instructions for him. He denied the accuracy of the report that he was about on the morrow to submit to Parliament his plan for the Regency. His motion merely affirmed the right of Parliament to deliberate on the present emergency; but the course of the recent debate had compelled him to outline his ideas. They were these: that the Regency should be vested in the Prince, with the power of freely choosing his Ministers, unrestrained by any Council. He had declined, and begged still to decline, to detail the other powers, because the House might reject his opinions as to its right to deliberate on the present crisis. If he gained its approval, he would be honoured by the Prince's permission to state to him the opinions which, after due inquiry, Ministers were able to form on the further proposals that might be submitted to Parliament.

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[1] Lecky, v, 148.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 705-13.

[3] Tomline, "Life of Pitt," ii, 388-92. There is a copy of this in the Pretyman archives at Orwell Park.

Was this language "arrogant" and "unconciliatory"? Could a Minister show more tact in seeking to harmonize the functions of the monarchy and of Parliament? Far from bringing his scheme cut and dried before Parliament and then foisting it upon the Prince, Pitt was compelled by the attack of Fox to outline his plan in Parliament, but he stated his views to the Prince courteously, and at the earliest opportunity. The only other possible alternative was to allow the Prince to take the matter into his own hands and override the powers of Parliament. It is also noteworthy that not until the next day (16th December) did Pitt move three Resolutions on the subject and these were of a preliminary character, affirming the right and duty of Parliament to take steps for meeting the present emergency.[1]

It should further be noted that the declaration of the Prince of Wales of his wish not to press his right was not made until the debate of 15th December in the House of Lords. The Duke of York, in a very tactful speech, said that his brother "understood too well the sacred principles which seated the House of Brunswick on the throne of Great Britain ever to assume or exercise any power, be his claim what it might, not derived from the will of the people, expressed by their representatives and their Lordships in Parliament assembled."[2] If Fox and Sheridan had treated the question in this way, there would have been no dispute. On the other hand the Prince does not seem to have sent a reply to the Prime Minister's missive; and his discourtesy probably led to the discontinuance of further communications from Pitt until that of 30th December, soon to be noticed.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 732-47. The date is given wrongly as 1st December; it should be 16th December. So, too, on p. 778, are the numbers in the division, which should be: for Government, 268, Opposition, 204.

[2] *Ibid.* 678.

The debates in the House of Lords were generally of small interest. But that of 15th December was memorable, not only for the tactful speech of the Duke of York noticed above, but also for the astute balancings of Thurlow. By the middle of December that political Blondin had seen the need of retracing his steps. As has already appeared, Fox strongly disapproved of shelving Loughborough in order to win Thurlow; and the clamour of the Whig peer, added to the arguments of Fox, led the Prince of Wales to retract his promise to the Chancellor. Even this, perhaps, would not have turned him had he not come to believe that Warren was wrong and Willis was right. Discerning a balance of gain in favour of fidelity to the King, he played that part with an emotion peculiarly affecting in so rugged a nature. His shaggy eyebrows rose and fell with great solemnity, as he deprecated these discussions on the "right" of this or that member of the constitution. They should await the inquiry into the precedents of the case. Meanwhile their duty was to preserve the dignities of the monarch intact until he should recover. Feelings of loyalty and gratitude imposed that duty, and particularly on himself, the recipient of so many benefits, "which whenever I forget, may God forget me."[1] Two men who listened to that climax expressed their feelings with diverse emphasis. Pitt, who knew all but the latest developments of the Thurlow-Sheridan intrigue, exclaimed, "Oh! the rascal." In Wilkes a sense of humour, unclouded by disgust, prompted the witticism: "Forget you! He'll see you damned first."

On 30th December, that is, seven days before the preliminary proposals for a Regency came before the House of Commons, Pitt drafted his suggestions in a most deferential letter to the Prince of Wales. In brief they were as follows. Ministers desired that the Prince should be empowered to exercise the royal authority, the care of the King and the control of his household being, however, vested in the Queen. The Regent, also, could not assign the King's property, grant any office beyond His Majesty's pleasure, or bestow any peerage except on the King's children after attaining their majority—restrictions which merely registered the belief that the King's illness was only temporary. At this time (the dawn of 1789) there were clear signs to this effect; and Willis drew up a report laying stress on his partial recovery; but, on his pressing Warren to sign it, the Whig practitioner refused.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 680. That Thurlow or his friends expected his dismissal, even late in the year 1789, appears from a letter of Pitt to George Rose contradicting a rumour to that effect (G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 98, 99).

Thus opened the most fateful of all years of modern history. The Whigs, the erstwhile guardians of popular freedom and the rights of Parliament, were straining every nerve to prove the King hopelessly insane, to foist upon the English people a hated Prince with unrestrained powers, as if Parliament had no voice in the matter, and to discredit the Prime Minister by representing his conduct as unconstitutional, and his letter to the Prince as insolent.

The best brains of the party were also concentrated on the task of inventing for the Prince a telling and dignified rejoinder. Political philosophy, law, and wit, came to his aid in the form of Burke, Loughborough, and Sheridan. Or, rather, the first two drafted the reply, which Sheridan then touched up. The brilliant Irishman pronounced the effusion of his sager compatriot "all fire and tow," and that of the jurist "all ice and snow." Fox, it seems, was to have revised the result; but the charms of Devonshire House on New Year's Day detained "Sherry" far into the night; and the document, hastily copied by Mrs. Sheridan, was hurried off to Carlton House without the promised recension at Holland House or Brooks's Club. Fox was furious at this neglect, and called his friend names which the latter preferred not to repeat to the Duchess.[1]

Such was this famous concoction. Connoisseurs, unaware of the facts, have confidently pronounced it the mellow vintage of Burke. Indeed, it is probable that the body of it may be his, while the bouquet may be Sheridan's and the dregs Loughborough's; but, the personal ingredients being unknown, it is useless to attempt a qualitative analysis. One thing alone is certain, that the Prince wrote not a word of it, but merely signed the fair copy when made out by Mrs. Sheridan. Thereupon the expectant Junto planned its public tapping, as an appetizing foretaste of the political wisdom of the new *régime*, Pitt meanwhile being dubbed a Republican and an insidious weakener of the executive power.

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[1] W. Sichel, "Sheridan," ii, 421-3. I cannot agree with Mr. Sichel (*ibid.*, ii, 192) that the letter was Sheridan's. The Duchess's diary shows it to have been a joint production. For the so-called Prince's letter see "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 909-912, or "Ann. Reg." (1789), 298-302. For Pitt's reply see Stanhope, ii, 18-20.

In more ways than one the situation was piquant. The *volte face* of parties was odd enough. Pitt seemed about to impair the strength of the hereditary principle and to exalt the power of Parliament; while the Whigs, who vehemently assailed the kingly prerogative in 1784, now as ardently belauded it in the person of the Prince. This contradiction extended even to details. Amidst all his appeals to precedents respecting a Regency, Pitt must in reality have resolved to discard them; and all research into the customs of the then almost absolute monarchy must have strengthened the case of those who scolded him for resorting to this device. But, in truth, all these inconsistencies vanish when we remember that the questions at issue were primarily medical and personal. Pitt's whole policy was therefore one of delay.

Owing to the death of the Speaker, Cornwall, and the subsequent election of William Grenville as his successor, the debates on the Regency were not resumed until 6th January; and ten more days elapsed before other preliminary questions were disposed of and the ministerial proposals were laid before the House. They were in substance the same as those submitted to the Prince on 30th December, except that a Council was now suggested for the purpose of assisting the Queen in the guardianship of the King and the regulation of the royal household.[1] It would be tedious to follow the course of the very lengthy debates which ensued. Ministers carried the Resolutions in both Houses; and the Prince somewhat grudgingly consented to act as Regent on the terms now proposed.

At the end of January Ministers proposed to legalize the proceedings of Parliament by the issue of letters patent under the Great Seal. A Commission was also appointed for the purpose of giving the royal assent and affixing the Seal to measures passed by the two Houses.[2] In spite of a vehement protest by

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 946-7. Able speeches on the Government side were made by the Speaker (Grenville) and the Solicitor-General, Sir John Scott, the future Lord Eldon. See Twiss, "Life of Lord Eldon," i, ch. ix.

[2] See May, "Constitutional Hist.," i, 155, 156, for the arguments for and against this proposal.

Burke, that he worshipped the gods of our glorious constitution, but would never bow down to Priapus (Thurlow), these proposals were carried. Not until 5th February were preliminaries disposed of; and Pitt then produced his Regency Bill. As it happened, the Opposition marred its own prospects by these dilatory tactics; for in a fortnight's time it was known that the need for the Bill had vanished.

The importance of these debates centres in the treatment of a very complex question by the two great rivals, Pitt and Fox. The conduct of the former has been sufficiently outlined. It remains to say a few words on that of Fox. Few of his speeches are more ingenious than those on the Regency. As a forcible handling of a weak case they have few equals. But the House of Commons is rarely won over by a dazzling display of "tongue-fencing." It demands to see the applicability of arguments to the needs of the time. This has been its peculiar excellence Its deliberations are rarely lit up with the radiance of immortal truths; but they are suffused with the comforting glow of the domestic hearth. Fox forgot this. In contrast with the accepted Whig doctrine, he put forth claims which, if pressed to their natural conclusion, would have implied the restoration of monarchy of the pre-Revolution type. If it was true that the Prince of Wales could demand the Regency as a right, or even as a "legal claim," free from all restrictions, how much more could the King govern independently of Parliament? A Regent is to a King what the moon is to the sun—a merely borrowed and temporary splendour. Apart, then, from an inconsistency of conduct highly damaging to a statesman, Fox committed the mistake of pledging himself to a scheme of government which was not only obsolete but unworkable.

Those who plod through the wearisome debates on the Regency must be conscious of an air of unreality. The references on both sides of the House to the cases of Edward VI or Henry VI were, after all, illusory; for in those times the powers of Parliament were ill defined. The nearest parallel to the present case was supplied by the events of 1688; and though pedants might appeal to certain forms observed by the Convention of that year, the significance of those events undoubtedly lay in the assertion of the supremacy of Parliament in all cases of a temporary lapse of the royal power. The argument for the supremacy of Parliament in all doubtful cases acquired redoubled strength from the Act of Settlement of 1701, which set aside hereditary right in favour of the House of Brunswick.

The arguments of Fox as to the inherent right of the Prince of Wales to the Regency must therefore be pronounced archaically interesting but inconclusive for any member of the reigning dynasty. The fact that they were adopted by the Irish Parliament adds nothing to their force; for that body was known to act more from corrupt motives or from opposition to George III and his Lord-Lieutenant, the Marquis of Buckingham, than from monarchical zeal.[1]

The divisions in the Parliament at Westminster were also much influenced by similar considerations. The numbers of those who went over to the Prince's side were surprisingly large. Among the Peers, the cases of the Marquis of Lothian and the Duke of Queensberry attracted especial notice, as they had received many benefits from the King. Of those helped on by Pitt, Lord Malmesbury and Gerald Hamilton (commonly known as "Single-Speech" Hamilton) were the worst defaulters. The former, after calling on Pitt to assure him of his devotion, suddenly "ratted" to the Prince and sent a very lame letter of excuse. To this Pitt replied that he had certainly misunderstood every expression in their late interview, and begged his Lordship to act in any way he thought fit without troubling to send an apology.[2] Malmesbury sought to appease his friend Carmarthen by offering to call and discuss things in the old way; but, if he had lost his esteem, he would prefer to retire and feed goats on a mountain "out of the reach of d—d Kings and d—d Regents."[3] What Carmarthen thought of the defaulters appeared in his witty reply to someone who asked how it came about that Fox had let the cat out of the bag so soon—"To catch the rats, I suppose."

The pamphlet literature that sprang up at this crisis is highly interesting. The hacks employed by the Opposition persistently accused Pitt of aiming at dictatorial power—a theme on which they richly embroidered, despite the well-known fact that he was preparing to resume his position as a barrister. It is somewhat significant that, while the nation warmly supported Pitt, he was bitterly assailed by Grub Street and Soho. Anonymous writers confidently foretold his ascendancy and the ruin of England. "A few years, perhaps, and our boasted commonwealth may be numbered among the governments that cover the earth —the awful ruins of edifices once consecrated to the rights and happiness of the human kind."[1] A "Private Citizen" urged the drawing up of an address to the Prince begging him to take the full regal power as a "simple and obvious mode of restoring the constitutional government to its full vigour."[2] A flurried patriot declared that he knew of "but one alarming Regency, which is that of ambitious Ministers voting themselves in power."[3] Another citizen, surely of Jacobite tendencies, proved that no power in the universe could appoint a Regent; for he assumed that office solely by hereditary right. As for "Regent Ministers," they would every day prostitute the dignity of the Crown in the animosities of debate, and the state of England would soon be worse than that of Poland.[4] Similar in tone is an "Address to those Citizens who had resisted the Claim of the late House of Commons to nominate the Ministers of the Crown." The writer asserts that only sophistry can deny that the sole question now is whether Pitt and his colleagues shall be invested with the regal authority with unlimited powers and for an indefinite period.[5] These insinuations harmonize with those which Buckingham found in circulation at Dublin; that the King had long been insane, but Pitt had concealed the fact in order to govern without control; and that the plan of a restricted Regency was the outcome of the same lust for power.[6]

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[1] For the intrigues and corruption at Dublin see "Dropmore P.," i, 385, 389, 395, *et seq.* The majority at Dublin dwindled away as soon as the King's recovery was known (*ibid.*, i, 417-25), a fact which damages Lecky's case.

[2] "Bland Burges P.," 116, 117; Wraxall, v, 242, 243.

[3] B.M. Add. MSS., 28064.

The falsity of these charges is obvious. Whether the Regency were a right or a trust, the Prince of Wales in the middle of February was about to become Regent; and if he chose to risk a conflict with Parliament he might at once dismiss Pitt and summon Fox to his counsels. On this all-important question there were no restrictions whatsoever. The restrictions solely concerned the relations between the Regent and the King, with two exceptions. These were the entrusting the Great Seal to a Commission, and the forbidding the Regent to create Peers except among the royal family; and here the aim obviously was to prevent the Prince obstructing legislation and swamping the House of Lords with his own nominees.

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[1] "Reflections on the Formation of a Regency" (Debrett, 1788), 17.

[2] "Thoughts on the present Proceedings of the House of Commons" (Debrett, 1788), 18.

[3] "Answer to the Considerations on . . . a Regency" (Debrett, 1788), 21.

[4] "A short View of the present Great Question" (Debrett, 1788), 11-15.

[5] *Op. cit.*, p. 6. Huish, "Mems. of George IV," i, 209, repeats some of these slanders against Pitt.

[6] "Dropmore P.," i, 377.

That the Prince did not dismiss Pitt was due, not to the lack of legal power to do so, but to the opportune recovery of the King. As appears by the reports of Dr. Willis, his health steadily improved throughout February. It is clear that Fox, who was drinking the waters at Bath, disbelieved the official bulletins on this subject and looked forward to a lease of power; for he wrote to Fitzpatrick on 17th February in terms of jubilation at the decision of the Irish Parliament, and added: "I hope by this time all idea of the Prince or any of us taking action in consequence of the good reports of the King are at an end: if they are not, do all you can to crush them. . . . I rather think, as you do, that Warren has been frightened. I am sure, if what I hear is true, that he has not behaved well. . . . Let me know by the return of the post on what day the Regency is like to commence."[1] From this it is obvious that the pessimism of Dr. Warren was not uninfluenced by political considerations.

The Prince was either better informed or more cautious than his favourite. On that same day a bulletin appeared announcing the King's convalescence. The signatories included Dr. Warren, who speedily fell into disgrace with the Prince's friends. On the 19th, at the request of the King, Thurlow had an interview with him and informed him of what had happened during his illness. We may be sure that the Chancellor's narrative illustrated that power of language to conceal thought which Talleyrand held to be its choicest function. Thurlow, on his return to town, moved the adjournment of the debate on the Regency Bill, which proved to be the beginning of the end of that measure.

A still severer test of the King's powers was afforded by his interview four days later with the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York. The Queen was present the whole time, and political topics were of course avoided. Grenville asserts that after that interview the Princes drove straight to Mrs. Armstead's house in Park Street in hopes of finding Fox there and informing him of the King's condition. Certain it is that, according to Willis's report to Pitt, "the Princes expressed great astonishment and satisfaction to Colonel Digby after their interview with the King, remarking only one or two trifling circumstances in which they thought His Majesty was not perfectly right. The King has been perfectly composed since, and his anxiety to see Mr. Pitt increases to that degree that probably Mr. Pitt will receive a message to that purport to-morrow morning."[1] Accordingly Pitt saw his sovereign on the 24th, and found him calm and dignified, without the slightest sign of flurry or disorder of mind. He spoke of his illness as a thing entirely past, and with tears in his eyes thanked all those who had stood by him. Even his emotion did not derange his faculties or mar his equanimity.[2]

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[1] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 302.

Meanwhile at Westminster the Opposition sought to vie with their rivals in expressions of loyal joy at the King's recovery. Viscount Stormont and other deserters to the Prince's side hastened to avow their satisfaction; and the Duke of York displayed some skill in depicting the heartfelt joy which filled his heart and that of his royal brother—sentiments which they further proceeded to illustrate by plunging into a round of orgies.[3] In the Commons Fox sought decently to draw a veil over the disappointment of his partisans.

The Providence which watches over the affairs of mortals sometimes wills that the *dénouement* of a problem shall come with dramatic effect. It was so now. The recovery of the King occurred in the very week to which the Prince's friends were eagerly looking forward as the time of entry into his enchanted palace.[4] Their chagrin, at the very moment when the paeans of triumph were on their lips, recalls the thrilling scene in "Paradise Lost," where the fiends are about to acclaim Satan at the end of the recital of his triumph over mankind, and raise their throats for the shout of victory, when, lo, the sound dies away in

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[1] Pitt MSS., 228. This is the last of Willis's reports to Pitt. It is undated, but must be of 23rd February. Willis ceased to attend the King on 11th March; but was at Windsor a short time in April and May.

[2] "Buckingham P.," ii, 125.

[3] "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 1293-5; "Buckingham P.," ii, 122, 123.

[4] "Auckland Journals," ii, 288, 289.

> A dismal universal hiss

issuing from thousands of forms suddenly become serpentine.[1]

Such (if we may compare small things with great) was the swift change from exultation to disgust which came over the Prince's friends. Shortly before the critical day, the 19th, they had declared that, were the Regent in power only for twelve hours, he would make a clean sweep of all official appointments. Indeed, from the outset, he and his followers had let it be known that no mercy would be shown to the Pitt Administration and its officials.[2] There is a manifest absurdity in the assertion of Sir Gilbert Elliot, that Ministers and their adherents looked on the Prince's following "as a prey to be hunted down and destroyed without mercy."[3] Up to the 19th of February this phrase aptly described the aim of their rivals. So early as 13th December 1788 Sheridan informed the Marquis of Buckingham that the Prince intended to dissolve Parliament both at Westminster and Dublin; for the Opposition "could not go on with the old one in England; and the choice of a new one in Ireland would give them a lasting advantage, *which is true*."[4] The large powers of patronage entrusted to the Regent would have influenced very many votes at the General Election, just as the prospect of princely rewards caused many place-hunters to change sides in the two Houses.

The lavishness of this form of bribery appears in a letter written by Sydney to Cornwallis about 20th February, wherein he asserts that the following promotions in the army were all but officially announced Four Field-Marshals, thirty-one Generals, twenty Lieutenant-Generals, twelve Major-Generals, besides many Colonels and lower grades; also ten new Aides-de-camp—almost all for political reasons. It was further known that Portland would be Prime Minister; Stormont and Fox, Secretaries of State; Loughborough, Chancellor; Sandwich or Fitzwilliam, First Lord of the Admiralty;[5] Spencer, Lord-

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[1] "Paradise Lost," x, 504-17.

[2] "Cornwallis Corresp.," i, 419.

[3] "Life of Sir G. Elliot," i, 272.

[4] "Dropmore P.," i, 386.

[5] The Prince promised this post to Sandwich; but on the remonstrance of the Duke of Portland and Fox, waived the point (W. Sichel, "Sheridan," ii, 415, 416).

Lieutenant of Ireland; Northumberland, Master-General of the Ordnance; Fitzpatrick, Secretary at War; Sheridan, President of the Board of Control.[1] We may note here that Northumberland and Lord Rawdon (afterwards the Earl of Moira) with some followers had formed a group standing somewhat apart, but acting with the Prince's friends on consideration of gaining office. They were called the Armed Neutrality; and their proceedings bore no small resemblance to a political auction, in which the Prince of Wales knocked down offices at discretion.[2]

The abrupt ending to these intrigues and bargains brought intense relief to every patriot. Independent observers, like Cartwright and Wyvill, had felt deep concern at the prospect of the rule of the Prince and Fox. "I very much fear," wrote the former to Wilberforce, "that the King's present derangement is likely to produce other derangements not for the public benefit. I hope we are not to be sold to the Coalition faction." Wyvill also wrote to Wilberforce: "Cabal I doubt not is labouring under his [Fox's] direction to overturn the present Government, while you and the other firm friends of Mr. Pitt are making equal exertions to prevent a change of men and measures. I think the general opinion is that the Prince has acted like a rash young man, that he is capable of being led into dangerous measures, and that men whom the nation greatly distrusts have all his confidence and esteem."[3]

Public opinion was, however, influenced by something more definite than distrust of the Prince and his favourites. By this time the nation confided entirely in the good sense and disinterestedness of Pitt. The Marquis of Buckingham expressed the general opinion when he called Pitt "the honestest Minister he ever saw."[4] Those qualities never shone more brightly than during the perplexing problem of the Regency. If he trammelled the Prince, it was in order to assert the supremacy of

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[1] "Cornwallis Corresp.," i, 419. Another and more probable version was that Earl Fitzwilliam would be Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Burke had striven hard to obtain the India Board of Control, "for the services and adherence of thirty years." So wrote James Macpherson to John Robinson. He adds: "If they agree, all the fat will be in the fire. A hint to the Prince would prevent it, for I plainly see his object is to carry on business as smoothly as he can" ("Abergavenny P.," 70).

[2] "Cornwallis Corresp.," i, 422.

[3] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 190, 191.

[4] "Dropmore P.," i, 363.

Parliament, and to prevent personal changes at Windsor which would probably have brought about a return of the King's malady. For himself, he prepared quietly and with dignity to resume his practice at the Bar. Had the recovery of George III been delayed another week, the Minister would have been found once more at Lincoln's Inn, looking on with his wonted serenity at the wholesale changes in the official world brought about by the vindictiveness of his rivals. So near was England then to the verge of a political crisis which would have embattled the nation against a Government foisted upon it by an unscrupulous Prince and a greedy faction.

Fortunately the crisis was averted; and, thanks to the wise measures taken by Pitt, the recovery of the royal patient was not interrupted by the sight of new faces around him at Kew and Windsor. Long and laboured explanations were afterwards offered to the King by the Prince of Wales, in which he had the effrontery to refer to the pain caused him when he "saw Her Majesty set up by designing men as the head of a system" which was "a device of private ambition."[1] After this he never was trusted or fully forgiven either by the King or Queen. Their confidence and that of the nation was heartily accorded to the Minister whose conduct had been as loyal and consistent as that of Laurentius in Pitt's early dramatic effort. Friends pointed to his simple and earnest regard for the public welfare throughout the whole dispute. By those qualities he peacefully solved a tangled problem and bound together the King and the people in a union of hearts such as had not been known since the accession of the House of Brunswick. On the evening of the day when George III resumed his regal functions, London was ablaze with illuminations which extended from Hampstead to Clapham and Tooting.[2] The joy of all classes of the people brimmed over once more at the Thanksgiving Service held at St. Paul's Cathedral on 23rd April, when the demonstrations of loyalty were such as to move the King to an outburst of emotion. The part played by Pitt was not forgotten. With difficulty he escaped from the importunities of his admirers, who had to content themselves with dragging his carriage back to his residence in Downing Street. Outwardly, this day marks the zenith of his career. True, he was to win one more diplomatic triumph over the House of Bourbon, the importance of which has been strangely under-rated. But already there was arising on the horizon a cloud, albeit small as a man's hand, which was destined to overcloud the sky and deluge the earth. Only ten days after the Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul's there assembled at Versailles the States-General of France, whose actions, helped on by the folly of the French princes, led to the subversion of that august monarchy. By so short an interval did the constitutional crisis in Great Britain precede a convulsion which was destined to overturn nearly every Government in the civilized world.

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[1] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 329.

[2] Wraxall, v, 336.

CHAPTER XIX

AUSTRALIA AND CANADA

The outcasts of an old Society cannot form the foundation of a new one.—*Parl. Report of 28th July* 1785.

The more enormous of our offenders might be sent to Tunis, Algiers, and other Mahometan ports, for the redemption of Christian slaves; others might be compelled to dangerous expeditions, or be sent to establish new colonies, factories, and settlements on the coast of Africa and on small islands for the benefit of navigation.—W. EDEN, *A Discourse on Banishment.*

THE first settlement of the white man on a Continent where all was strange might seem to be a topic more engaging, as well as more important, than the escapades of a selfish young prince and the insanity of his father. But the piles of printed paper respecting the affairs of Carlton House and the Regency attest the perennial preference of mankind for personal topics; and its disregard of wide issues that affect the destinies of nations is seen in the mere scraps of information concerning the early colonization of Australia. The statement of the late Sir John Seeley that the British people founded an Empire in a fit of absence of mind is nowhere more true than of the events of the years 1787, 1788, which marked the beginning of a new epoch of expansive energy.

There is a curious periodicity about the colonizing efforts of the British race. At one time the islanders send forth swarms of adventurers and make wide conquests. At another time the colonies languish for lack of settlers; so that one is tempted to compare these movements, albeit slow and irregular, with those of the blood in the human organism. They have had beneficial results. The contracting impulse has prevented that untimely diffusion of the nation's energies which leads to atrophy of the essential organs. But when these are once more in full vigour they can do naught else but send forth their vitalizing streams.

By this systole and diastole the nation recovers strength and makes use of that strength. The variation of effort is doubly beneficent. It prevents the too great effusion of life-blood which enfeebled Portugal in the sixteenth century; and the recurrence of the colonizing instinct has saved England from the undue absorption in domestic affairs which until recently narrowed the life of France.

The terrible drain of the American War naturally concentrated the attention of Britons for some time on home affairs. The most imperious need of the body politic was rest; and, as we have seen, Pitt used all his tact and energy to bestow and prolong that boon. Fortunately, the loss of life had been slight. Lack of money rather than of men put a stop to colonizing efforts and induced the belief that they weakened the State. But the life-blood was there in abundance, ready to flow forth as soon as confidence returned and the will was quickened.

Meanwhile, for want of a firm and intelligent lead, the experiment began slowly and awkwardly. As is well known, it was excess of population, of a particular type, which led the authorities to take action. The savage penal code of that age hanged or immured in gaol numbers who would now escape with a small fine. As many as 160 offences were punishable with death, and this gives the measure of the code, in its less Draconian enactments. Indeed, but for sleepy Dogberries, and reluctant jurymen, a tenth part of the population might have lodged in the filthy gaols which formed the fruitful seed-bed of crime. Goldsmith in his "Vicar of Wakefield" asks whether the licentiousness of our people or the stupid severity of our laws was responsible for the numbers of our convicts doubling those of continental lands. The question impelled John Howard and Romilly to their life-long efforts.

Meanwhile the State continued to avert the need of building more gaols by extending its time-honoured methods, hanging and transportation.[1] During the years 1714-65 those two cures for overcrowding enjoyed increasing favour. Under the first George any one found guilty of larceny, either "grand" or "petit," might be transported to America for seven years. The same penalty was inflicted in the next reign on poachers who were caught, with arms in their hands, in the act of chasing or taking deer in unenclosed forests; or, again, it fell to be the lot of those who assaulted magistrates or officers engaged in salving wrecks, and likewise on all who were married without banns or licence. It was reserved for the law makers of George III to allot seven years of transportation to all who stole or took fish "in any water within a park, paddock, orchard or yard, and the receivers, aiders and abettors." Sir William Eden, in his "Discourse on Banishment," cites these offences as about the average of the crimes punishable by transportation; but he hints that many less heinous offences led to the same dreary goal. That philanthropist apparently did not think it an ingenious means of torture to send some of these convicts to Algiers to rescue from life-long slavery the Christians caught by the Barbary rovers.

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[1] For some good results of transportation see Lecky, vi, 253.

Meanwhile, the United States having closed their doors against poachers, thieves, and those who married in too great haste, a paternal Government found it necessary either to relax the penal code, to build more prisons, to commission more hulks, or to found new penal settlements. Georgian legislators, being practical men, turned their thoughts to the last alternative. The subject was brought up in the House of Commons by Burke on 16th March 1785. He asserted that as many as 100,000 convicts were then liable to transportation; and protested against the rigour, cruelty, and expense attending that mode of punishment. Lord Beauchamp again called the attention of the House to that topic on 11th April, when Pitt admitted the importance of finding a new penal settlement. The Gambia River in West Africa had been used for that purpose; and Burke now rose to protest against the inhumanity of sending convicts to any part of that deadly coast. He was interrupted by the Prime Minister, who assured him that such a plan was not in contemplation, and that a Report would soon be issued.[1]

Parliamentary Papers on this subject appeared on 9th May and 28th July. The latter is remarkable for the statesmanlike utterance, quoted as a motto at the head of this chapter, which shows that at least some of our politicians looked on a new settlement as something more than a chapel-of-ease of our prisons. In other respects the Report is somewhat puerile. It recommended the need of strict discipline in the new settlement, and pointed out the district of the River das Voltas as desirable. If this were the same as the River Volta of the Gold Coast, the Committee evidently regarded fever as the most effective of governors.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxv, 430-2.

It is curious to speculate on the results that might have attended these weak and stumbling moves. Probably the strenuous opposition of Burke vetoed the Gambia and Gold Coast schemes; but the Government, still intent upon the Atlantic coast of Africa, sent a sloop, H.M.S. "Nautilus," to survey the south-west coast between 15° 50′ and 33°. Very fortunately for the future of the British people the whole coast was found to be inhospitable. If the *hinterland* of Walfisch Bay or Angra Pequeña had been less barren it is almost certain that the new penal colony would have been formed at one of those spots. Ministers also turned their attention to the coasts adjacent to Cape Town; for we find Pitt writing to Grenville on 2nd October 1785: "I have desired Devagnes also to send you some papers relative to a scheme of a settlement on the Caffre coast, to answer in some respects the purposes of the Cape, and to serve also as a receptacle for convicts, which I hope you will have time to look at."[1]

This points to a plan for settling some point of the coast of Caffraria, possibly Algoa Bay or what is now East London. There were special reasons for gaining a foothold in that quarter, seeing that the Dutch Republic was falling more and more under the control of France, and the union of those two Powers in the East would have threatened the existence of our Indian Empire. A British stronghold on the South African coast was therefore highly desirable; but perhaps matters were too strained in the years 1786 and 1787 for this menacing step to be taken.

Whatever may have been the cause, Pitt and his colleagues failed to find a point on the African coast suitable for their purpose, which was to found a penal settlement furnishing relief alike to the prison system and to British ships midway on the voyage to India. Had they discovered such a place the course of history might have been very different. The English-speaking race would early have taken so firm a hold of South Africa as to press on a solution of the Anglo-Dutch question. But in the meantime the Pacific coast of Australia would have gone to France. The one study in which Louis XVI shone, and in which Pitt was most deficient, was geography. The lord of Versailles found his chief mental recreation in maps and books of travel. Already he had sent out expeditions to rival that of Captain Cook; and, as we shall see, only by the infinitesimal margin of six days did Britons secure a foothold in Australia in advance of their rivals.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 257.

The honour of turning the attention of Ministers to the Pacific coast of "New Holland" belongs to Sir Joseph Banks, James Matra, and Admiral Sir George Young. In his description of the voyage of Captain Cook along the coast of New South Wales, Banks had spoken of the rich soil and wealth of vegetation around Botany Bay, a description which undoubtedly led Matra and Young to take up the matter. Sir Joseph Banks did not pursue the theme. At least in his letters and papers in the British Museum there is no hint that he induced Pitt or Lord Sydney to people that terrestrial paradise. Perhaps the work of the Royal Society, of which he was President, engaged all his attention.

James Maria Matra, a Corsican who had long been in the British service and had accompanied Banks in the memorable voyage of Captain Cook,[1] was the first to formulate a definite scheme for the colonization of Botany Bay. In a long letter, dated 23rd August 1783, he pointed out to the Coalition Cabinet the great extent of the land, the fertility of the soil, and the paucity of the natives as marking it out for settlement, especially by the American Loyalists, whose dire distress then aroused deep sympathy. He also declared that the nearness of New South Wales to the Spice Islands, India, China, and Japan, was favourable for commerce; that the growth of New Zealand flax would provide endless supplies of cordage for shipping; and that, in case of war, the harbours of New South Wales would furnish a useful base of naval operations against the Dutch and Spanish settlements in the East. In his original scheme Matra did not mention settlement by convicts. He desired to found a colony either by means of United Empire Loyalists, or "marines accustomed to husbandry,"[2] a suggestion which recalls, not very felicitously, the Roman plan of planting veteran soldiers on the outposts of the realm.

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[1] Evan Nepean in a Report to Pitt sketched the career of Matra. He was afterwards Consul for Morocco (Pitt MSS., 163).

[2] "New South Wales Despatches," vol. i, pt. ii, 1-5.

The discredit of making the first suggestion in favour of a convict settlement at Botany Bay probably belongs to Lord Sydney, Secretary of State for Home Affairs in the Pitt Cabinet. Matra had a conversation with him on 6th April 1784, in which the Minister hinted at the desirability of relieving the congestion in the prisons, which was giving trouble to the authorities. The details of the conversation are not known; but apparently it led Matra to add a postscript to his scheme, in which he referred to the interview and remarked on the frightful mortality among the convicts sent to the West Coast of Africa. Out of 746 sent there in 1775-6, 334 died, 271 deserted, and nothing was known of the remainder. Obviously in a distant and healthy climate like Botany Bay, men must either work or starve; certainly they could not return.[1] Nothing definite seems to have come of Matra's conversation with Sydney or his plan, even as now modified.

Scarcely more successful were the efforts of Admiral Sir George Young to interest Ministers in the subject. His scheme was sent by the Attorney-General, Sir Richard Pepper Arden, to Sydney on 13th January 1785. The admiral called attention to the facilities which New South Wales would enjoy for a lucrative trade with New Spain, China, and the East Indies. He laid stress on the fertility of the soil and the variety of climates in the new possession, which would ensure the growth of all tropical and sub-tropical products. New Zealand flax would by itself furnish several requisites for ship-building and repairing, thereby freeing us from dependence on Russia. Metals would probably be found; and thus at a small expense (about £2,000) an important commercial mart might be founded. Sir George Young deprecated any plan of emigration from Great Britain as weakening to her; but he suggested that the distressed American Loyalists should be transferred to New South Wales, and that labourers might be collected from the Society Islands and China. "All the people required from England are only a few that are possessed of the useful arts, and those comprised among the crews of the ships that may be sent on that service." He, however, added that convict settlements might most suitably be planted there. Finally, he claimed that the whole scheme would further the cause of religion and humanity, and redound to the prosperity and glory of King George III.[1]

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[1] "New South Wales Despatches," 6, 7; E. Jenks, "Hist. of the Australasian Colonies," 25.

The ideas and the phraseology of the Memorandum are so similar to those used by Matra as to suggest that Sir George Young founded his plan on that of the Corsican; and the Admiral at the end of his Plan introduced three sentences on the suitability of parts of New South Wales for convicts. Possibly this was inserted in order to attract Ministers. Nevertheless they took no action on the matter; and possibly, but for the pressure exerted by Lord Beauchamp and Burke on 11th April 1785, this vitally important question would have remained in abeyance. Pitt, however, then promised that Government would take it up. The "Nautilus" was accordingly sent to the African coast, with the result that we have seen; and the humiliating truth must be confessed that the Ministry showed no sign of interest, if we except the single sentence in Pitt's letter of 2nd October 1785, quoted above, respecting a settlement in Caffraria.

Not until 18th August 1786 do we find any sign that the Government sought to redeem its promise to Parliament. The Pitt Papers, however, afford proof that Ministers had before them at least one other scheme for the disposing of convicts elsewhere than in New Holland. On 14th September 1786 William Pulteney wrote to Pitt an important letter (quoted in part in Chapter XIV), which concluded as follows: "I mentioned to Mr. Dundas that a much better plan had been proposed to Lord Sidney [*sic*] for disposing of our felons than that which I see is advertised, that of sending them to Botany Bay; but his Lordship had, too hastily I think, rejected it; if you wish to know the particulars, Mr. Dundas can in great measure explain them, and I can get the whole in writing."[2]

Pitt gave no encouragement to his correspondent, and the official plan, already drafted, ran its course. On 18th August 1786, Sydney sent to the Lords of the Treasury a statement that, considering the crowded state of the prisons and the impossibility of finding a suitable site for a settlement in Africa, the King had fixed on Botany Bay, owing to the accounts given by those who had sailed with Captain Cook. As many as 750 convicts would therefore be sent out, along with 180 marines, provisions for two years, seeds, tools, and other necessaries for the founding of a settlement. The importance of growing New Zealand flax was named,—a sign that Ministers had consulted the reports of Matra and Sir George Young, and saw the need of having a naval station in the Pacific. A fortnight later Sydney sent a similar letter to the Lords of the Admiralty.[1]

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[1] "New South Wales Despatches," 11-13. A copy of this "Plan" is in Pitt MSS., 342.

[2] Pitt MSS., 169.

In this halting and prosaic way did Ministers set their hands to one of the most fruitful undertakings of all time. We do not know which member took the initiative. Probably it was Sydney, as Minister for Home Affairs; but Pitt certainly gave his approval, and there are two letters which show that he took interest in details. One is his letter to Evan Nepean, Under Secretary for Home Affairs, requesting him to obtain from the Secretary of the Admiralty, Sir Charles Middleton, an estimate of the expenses of the expedition.[2] The second is a letter from the Lord Chief Justice, Earl Camden, to Pitt, who must have consulted him about the legal questions involved in the formation of the colony:

> Hill St., *Jany.* 29, 1787.[3]
>
> DEAR PITT,
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> . . . I have looked over the draught of the Bill for establishing a summary Jurisdiction in Botany Bay. I believe such a jurisdiction in the present state of that embryo (for I can't call it either settlement or colony) is necessary, as the component parts of it are not of the proper stuff to make jurys [*sic*] in capital cases especially. However, as this is a novelty in our constitution, would it not be right to require the Court to send over to England every year a report of all the capital convictions, that we may be able to see in what manner this jurisdiction has been exercised? For I presume it is not meant to be a lasting jurisdiction; for if the colony thrives and the number of inhabitants increase, one sh^{d} wish to grant them trial by jury as soon as it can be done with propriety.

Clearly, then, Pitt had a distinct share in the drafting of the Bill for establishing the settlement. The general plan had been decided at a Council held at St. James's Palace on 6th December 1786.[4] The Letters Patent forming the Courts of Law were issued on 2nd April 1787; but it was not until 12th May that H.M.S. "Sirius" and "Supply," escorting the transports "Alexander," "Charlotte," "Scarborough," "Prince of Wales," "Friendship," and "Lady Penrhyn," set sail from Spithead on their dreary voyage of eight months. On 20th January 1788 Governor Phillip landed at Botany Bay, and a few days later he transferred his strange company to the land-locked and beautiful Port Jackson, on an inlet of which he founded the infant settlement of Sydney. He was just in time to anticipate the French expedition under La Pérouse, which sailed into the harbour only six days after Phillip landed at Botany Bay. Thus, by extraordinary good luck, despite all the delays at Westminster, the British narrowly forestalled their rivals in the occupation of that magnificent coast. Captain Cook, it is true, had claimed it for the British Crown; but in international law effective occupation is a necessary sequel to so vague and sweeping a declaration. The choice of the name "Sydney" for the infant settlement attests the conviction of Governor Phillip that the whole plan owed very much to the initiative of that nobleman. It is, however, strange that the name of Pitt was not given to some town or river of the colony; for he certainly played an important part in the undertaking.

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[1] "New South Wales Despatches," 14-23.

[2] *Ibid.*, 32.

[3] Pitt MSS., 119.

[4] "New South Wales Despatches," i, pt. ii, 30. See later (pp. 67-70) for the details of the Act of Parliament.

Nevertheless, the whole question reflects no great credit either on Pitt or Sydney. Neither of them had shown much insight or eagerness in the matter. Especially may they and their colleagues be blamed for not having resolved, though at slightly increased cost, to found the colony worthily by means of the American Loyalists who had suffered so much for their devotion to King and Fatherland.

The question of the American Loyalists will be referred to later in this chapter; and it is not here suggested that those Loyalists who had migrated to the lands soon to be known as New Brunswick and Ontario should have been sent to the Southern Seas. There were many others, who had set sail with the British garrisons leaving New York and other towns, now available for that experiment. They were living in England in penury and with hope deferred, while the question of the indemnity in honour due to them from the United States slowly petered out. The British Parliament was investigating their claims and finally acknowledged its obligations to them; but in the meantime they were in want. Would not the Ministry have consulted their interests and the welfare of the Empire by offering to them to commute their pecuniary claims for grants of land and expenses of settlement in New South Wales? The possible objection, that their claims had not been entirely investigated by the year 1787, is trifling. The offer might surely have been made to those whose cases and characters were well known, and who were suited to a life of hardship and adventure. There must have been very many who would have preferred a free and active life to one of wretchedness in London; and when we reflect on the great accession of strength brought by the Loyalists to Canada and New Brunswick, it will ever remain a matter of regret that Ministers acted on the motive which appealed so forcibly to Lord Sydney, that of easing the pressure on prisons.

For the time, it is true, their experiment was highly economical, the cost of the expedition and settlement at Sydney from October 1786 to October 1789 being only £8,632, or one-eighteenth part of the sum which in the year 1787 Parliament unanimously voted for the discharge of the debts of a spendthrift prince.[1] It is scarcely fair to read the ideas of our age into one from which we have moved very far away, or to censure Pitt for his complaisance to the future George IV, while he pared down the expenses of the greatest colonial experiment of his generation. No one could foresee the splendid future of the "Isle of Continent." Even Matra and Sir George Young, who gazed far ahead, believed that the work of the settlement must be done mainly by Chinese and South Sea Islanders.

Nevertheless, seeing that the advantage of utilizing the energies of American Loyalists was clearly laid before Ministers, it is astonishing that they paid no heed to a plan which might ultimately have proved to be more economical even than the export of convicts. Certainly it would have furnished the new land with the best of colonists. The kith and kin of the men who built up Ontario and New Brunswick would have laid broad and deep the foundations of New South Wales. The greatest good fortune of North America was the advent of Puritan leaders as founders of a State; and the transfer to the Southern Continent of their descendants, who rivalled them in the staunchness of their fidelity to principle, would have been an Imperial asset of priceless worth. There are times when the foresight and imagination of a statesman mean infinitely much to the future of the race; and no action is more fruitful in results than the settlement of a new Continent. The Greeks did well to solemnize the sending forth of colonists by the honours of the State and the sanction of religion. And what they did for the founding of one more Greek city, Great Britain ought to have done for the occupation of a coast-line known to possess vast possibilities of growth.

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[1] J. Bonwick, "The First Twenty Years of Australia," 6.

The painful truth must be faced that in this matter Pitt lacked the Imperial imagination. Despite vague assertions to the contrary by professed panegyrists, I cannot find a word in his speeches or letters which evinced any interest in the Botany Bay experiment. Thus, in the debate of 9th February 1791, on the condition of the young settlements and the question of stopping the transportation of 1,850 more convicts, Pitt spoke of that experiment as if it were an improved and economical prison. His speech did not rise to the level of that of Sir Charles Bunbury and Mr. Jekyll, the mover and seconder of the motion for an inquiry into the whole subject of transportation. They both pleaded for more rational methods of punishment, wherein the depraved would cease to contaminate the less guilty. Bunbury commented on the alarming increase of crime of late years, the number of sentences of death having been doubled, while convictions for felony had quadrupled. Both he and Jekyll pressed for the construction of penitentiaries where the system of "that good and useful citizen, Mr. Howard," might be better enforced; and they mentioned the report that the settlements in New South Wales were ill-suited to this purpose, owing to the sterility of the soil.

To this last charge Pitt made no effective answer. So far as we can judge from the semi-official reports, he sought refuge in the miserable reply that "in point of expense no cheaper mode of disposing of the convicts could be found," and that, as the chief cost of starting that settlement had been already incurred—how paltry the cost we have seen—it would be foolish to seek for some other place where those expenses must again be met! He expressed his approval of penitentiaries, said nothing about that fruitful mother of crime, the penal code, and declined to take any steps for stopping the transport of the 1,850 convicts. It was something that, amidst these frigid negations, he did not oppose the motion for an inquiry into the condition of Botany

Bay. Curiously enough, he did not once name the only considerable settlement, Sydney,[1] so limited was his outlook on social and colonial problems. Wide as were his views on most questions, it must be admitted that here was his blind side; and he must be held partly responsible for spreading over new lands a social taint which long blighted their progress.

That taint was to vanish; and its disappearance in a few generations is a signal proof that, under fit conditions, the human race does not degenerate but wins its way to higher levels. Nevertheless, in view of the power of historic ideas and traditions, we must ever regret that Pitt and his colleagues did not resolve to make the new settlement a living proof of Britain's care for the staunchest and truest of her children.

By a transition which, however abrupt in a geographical sense, is slight in the sphere of politics, we pass from the settlement of New South Wales to the adjustment of affairs in Canada. Both questions resulted from the American War. The refugees from the old American colonies, who now huddled with their families in the purlieus of Soho, formed the tough nucleus of what had been a very large and influential band of men in the States. Writers of the school of Bancroft used to treat the Loyalists as traitors who richly deserved the hanging or shooting in cold blood which not seldom befell them at the hands of righteous patriots. Those, however, who regard history, not as a means of enforcing certain opinions, but of reflecting the life of the time, are generally agreed that the Loyalists acted from sincere conviction, which led them deliberately to face cruel and prolonged persecution. At the outset of the war they numbered about one third of the population of the States; and, at least 20,000 of them joined the British forces.[2] By the end of the war about 60,000 Loyalists were compelled to leave the States, of whom nearly one half settled in the future province of New Brunswick; some 10,000 went to found the British population in Upper Canada (Ontario); but many sailed with the retiring garrisons to Great Britain.[3]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 1221-5. For an account of the new settlement see "The History of New Holland, 1616-1787."

[2] Sabine, "The American Loyalists," 51 *et seq.*

[3] Sir C. P. Lucas, "Hist. Geography of the Brit. Colonies," v (Canada), 73.

It is with these last that we are here at first concerned. Their number was given as 428 in the official inquiry of 1782-3,[1] but that list was probably incomplete. Their condition soon became pitiable. By the Treaty of Versailles (September 1783) the American Congress pledged itself to recommend the States of the Union to restore the property confiscated from the Loyalists. The States ignored the recommendation. Pitt has sometimes been blamed for not doing more to press the fulfilment of this treaty obligation, which was carried out only by South Carolina. But he seems to have taken the only means possible, namely, of refusing to surrender certain of the western forts of the States, until satisfaction was accorded on this head.[2] John Adams, who arrived in London as ambassador from the United States in 1786, received that answer to his protest, a fact which suffices to disprove the statement that the clause of the treaty relating to the Loyalists was inserted merely for effect.[3]

Pitt further sought to carry out the stipulations for the collection of debts due to the Loyalists before the beginning of the war. He sent out a Mr. Anstey to deal with these thorny and almost hopeless claims. The matter dragged on; and a letter forwarded to the Prime Minister on 30th January 1787 refers to the inquiry as still incomplete.[4] In 1785 Pitt offered to grant due compensation to the American Loyalists; but long and most discreditable delays ensued. Several petitions forwarded to Pitt show that payments were either inadequate or were often deferred, and that the petitioners were in much distress.[5] The letter above referred to states that from £60,000 to £80,000 a year had been granted in pensions; but that in 1787, owing to deaths and other causes, the amount fell to £50,000. Even this exceeds the average of the official amount by some £7,000.[1] The writer goes on to assert that the utmost possible had been done to relieve the distress, and shows the unreasonableness of the claim of some Loyalists for compensation for the loss of their professions. Finally the whole matter was cleared up by the proposal of Pitt to the House of Commons on 6th June 1788 to vote the sum of £1,228,239 to the Loyalists in proportion to the merits of their cases, and £113,952 to the claimants from West Florida. To this the House agreed, Burke commending the proposal as "a new and noble instance of national bounty and generosity."[2]

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[1] Kingsford, "Hist. of Canada," vii, 216.

[2] I cannot agree with Professor E. Channing ("The United States, 1765-1865," 118) that the action of the States towards the Loyalists "was not an infraction of the treaty." The terms bound the United States to do their utmost to induce the component States to compensate the Loyalists. But they took only the slightest and most perfunctory steps in that direction. Pitt, as we saw in Chapter VI, distinctly enjoined it as a debt of honour on the United States, and cannot surely be held responsible for its evasion.

[3] Kingsford, "Hist. of Canada," vii, 215; Sir C. P. Lucas, "Hist. of Canada, 1763-1812," 214.

[4] Pitt MSS., 344.

[5] *Ibid.* The cases of Samuel Gale, Sir John Johnson, F. J. D. Smyth, and R. F. Pitt seem especially hard.

Pitt evidently considered the question as settled by the distribution of this sum and of certain grants of land in Canada; for in the year 1792, when other claims were forwarded to him through the medium of Sir Henry Clinton, he replied as follows in a letter of 29th May 1792:

> On the fullest consideration of the subject, I have not thought myself justified in proposing to open the Commission again for inquiry into those cases which were not brought forward within any of the periods before limited; and under these circumstances it seems impossible to give any compensation for particular losses. The plan has therefore been adopted of giving some provision by grants of land in Canada, to such persons of this description as may be willing to accept it; and of advancing them certain sums of money (according to the classes in which they have been distributed) for the purpose of assisting them in removing and in settling themselves. With respect to the three persons whom you particularly mention of the name of Plater, Harding and Williams, the granting to them the sums recommended by Col. Delancy was delayed from its appearing that they had formerly had an advance for the purpose of enabling them to go to America; but notwithstanding this circumstance it has been determined from the nature of their cases

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[1] See J. E. Wilmott, "Hist. View of the Commission . . . of the American Loyalists" (London, 1815).

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 610-19. The total expenses incurred on behalf of the American Loyalists as shown in the Budgets of the years 1784 to 1789 are as follows: £82,750; £190,019; £315,873; £132,856; £82,346; £362,922; or a total of £1,084,016. These sums are distinct from the special votes of £1,228,239 and £113,952 above referred to; which raise the total for those six years to £2,426,207. I take these figures from the Budgets as given in the Annual Registers. It is impossible to harmonize them with Wilmott's figures. He gives £3,112,455 as the total up to and including the year 1790.

and your strong testimony in their favour, to comply with this recommendation, which will be immediately carried into effect.[1]

The settlement of the Loyalists in Canada and Nova Scotia produced far-reaching results. About 28,000 settled in Nova Scotia, the larger portion of them selecting the banks of the River St. John. Besides being far removed from Halifax, the seat of government, they found themselves absolutely without influence in the administration, as the Governor refused to enlarge the Legislative Council by admitting one of their number. They therefore petitioned the Home Government for separation from Nova Scotia—a request which was at once granted (1784). Pitt thus showed his complete confidence in the Loyalists and in the policy of according full liberty in local affairs to a community which obviously needed such a boon.

Not very dissimilar were the results of the influx of the Loyalists into Canada Proper. About 10,000 of them crossed Lake Ontario or the Niagara River, and formed a thin fringe of settlements along the Upper St. Lawrence and Lakes Ontario and Erie. In 1784 Governor Haldimand granted to them large tracts of land, generally in proportion to the services rendered during the war.[2] In many cases, the settlement was of a semi-military character; and everywhere the colonists took a pride in adding to their names "U.E.," to denote the United Empire for which they had fought and suffered. The lot of many of them was hard in the extreme; but it seems that even those who had been reared in luxury preferred the rigours of the Canadian winter in a log-hut to the persecutions which would have been their lot in the United States.

A settlement of a very different kind was that of de Puisaye and some fifty French royalists in the autumn of 1798. Puisaye was a man of fine physique and perseverance, as appeared in his continuance of the Breton revolt long after the unmanly departure of the Comte d'Artois from the Ile d'Yeu in 1795 (see Chapter XXXVI). But by the year 1798 he wearied of that fell work, and proposed with other adventurous spirits to settle in Canada. The Duke of Portland and Windham favoured the scheme; and a district named Windham was allotted to them between York (Toronto) and Lake Simcoe. But the ill-fortune of the French noblesse dogged them in the New World. They arrived too late. Probably they knew nothing of the work required of them. Even more probably they quarrelled, intrigued, and formed factions. Puisaye left the place and settled for a time near the Niagara River, until at the Peace of Amiens he went back to England. The Windham settlement went to pieces, thus once more revealing the incompetence of that product of the *ancien régime*, the French *seigneur*.[1]

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[1] Pitt MSS., 102. Colonel Delancey named by Pitt was probably Lieutenant-Colonel Stephen Delancey (1740-98), who helped to raise a loyal battalion at New York and finally became Governor of Tobago. His son, Sir William Delancey, was Wellington's Quarter-Master-General at Waterloo, where he was killed.

[2] Greswell ("Hist. of the Dominion of Canada," 144) states that £4,000,000 was then allotted to the settlers in Upper Canada. I can nowhere find any confirmation of this. Kingsford, "Hist. of Canada," mentions only grants of land and small sums of money; but states (vii, 217) that in all the sum of £3,886,087 was granted to the Loyalists in Great Britain.

The arrival of the United Empire Loyalists altered the political situation in Canada in two ways: it provided for the first time a relatively large body of English-speaking settlers, and it brought to the front the question of representative institutions. Hitherto the French *habitans*, scattered sparsely along the Lower St. Lawrence and the Richelieu Rivers, had shown little or no desire in that direction; but questions arising out of the war caused some stir in those primitive communities. A time of much unrest followed. The British merchants and traders at Quebec and Montreal also had their grievances against the Government and the French majority; so that in 1784 a Committee comprising men of those towns petitioned the Governor for an elective House of Assembly.

In order to understand the meaning of this request, we must remember that election had no place in the Canadian Government. By the Quebec Act of 1774, which regulated public affairs for the colony, the administration of affairs rested with a Governor representing the King, an Executive Council consisting of members selected by him, and a Legislative Council formed on the same basis. The framers of that measure had also frankly recognized the fact that the population of the colony was overwhelmingly French. They therefore provided for the continuance of French law and French customs, both religious and agrarian—a well-meant measure which, while ensuring the loyalty of the Canadians during the American War of Independence, aroused the anger of British settlers and merchants. The United Empire Loyalists in Upper Canada found these French customs insufferable. They had not left the United States in order to merge themselves in a community modelled on the France of Louis XIV.

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[1] Sir C. P. Lucas, "Hist. of Canada" (1763-1812), 230-2.

Moreover, in other respects, the Quebec Act failed to meet the needs of the colonists; so that Fox described Canada as having no settled government.[1] Here he erred. The bane of that land was too much government. The settlers were beset by too many decrees, several of which were inapplicable to the needs of the growing mercantile communities at Quebec and Montreal, who found themselves hampered by the French laws and were in constant friction with the "ancient" colonists. They therefore sent the petition of 1784, requesting the bestowal of representative institutions and of British law, both mercantile and criminal; but they admitted the need of retaining French laws for agriculture, property, religion, and social life. Such an admission was repugnant to settlers in the upper districts, who in 1785 petitioned for entire exemption from French laws and customs.[2]

As was but natural, Pitt and his colleagues seem to have been perplexed by the difficulty of this problem, which certainly was one of infinite complexity. It soon appeared, as the outcome of official inquiries, that, taking Canada as a whole, there was only one English-speaking colonist to fifteen French. The small British population was centred almost entirely in Quebec and Montreal (even there it was only a third of the population), or else straggled along the Upper St. Lawrence into the almost unknown wilds between Lakes Ontario and Huron. How was it possible, at the bidding of so insignificant a minority, to repeal the French laws and enrage the majority? Would not France and the States be certain to intervene and thus fill to the full the cup of disaster?

For the present the Pitt Cabinet limited its efforts to the strengthening of the executive powers at Quebec by enlarging the powers of the new Governor-General, Lord Dorchester (1786) so that they extended over the upper districts, and also over

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 505 (debate of 8th March 1790).

[2] Kingsford, *op. cit.*, vii, 234-236.

New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Meanwhile Pitt and Sydney awaited the results of the inquiries set on foot in Canada; and, though the resulting delay was irritating at the time, it proved to be beneficial; for before the Ministry at home could frame its Bill, the outbreak of the French Revolution had minimized the danger of intervention from France.

Mishaps to the despatches, the substitution of Grenville for Sydney as Home Secretary, in June 1789, and the General Election of 1790, further retarded legislation on this subject. Twice in the year 1790 Grenville had to apologize to the House for delays due to the terrible weather of the winter of 1789-90.[1] On the latter occasion he described his endeavours to get at the truth of the situation in Canada, his conferences with his colleagues, and his assiduity in drafting the Bill which he promised to place before them as soon as he received Dorchester's replies to certain questions. This declaration is interesting as showing that the famous Act of 1791 was really drafted by Grenville, and that he considered it his own. In view, however, of his very recent appointment to the Home Office, and of his intimate relations to Pitt, we may be sure that the spirit informing the measure was that of the Prime Minister. We now know, however, that Grenville was responsible for the proposal to confer hereditary titles on the members of the Governor's Legislative Council;[2] and it is significant that, while Pitt acquiesced in it, no such creation of a colonial nobility ever took place.

Grenville having been raised to the peerage in November 1790, Pitt moved for leave to bring in the Canada Bill to the Lower House (4th March 1791). In an explanatory speech, he stated the aim of the measure to be "to promote the happiness and internal policy [progress?] of the province and to put an end to the differences of opinion and growing competition that had for some years existed in Canada between the ancient inhabitants and the new settlers from England and America [*sic*] on several important points, and to bring the government of the province, as near as the nature and situation of it would admit, to the British Constitution." He therefore proposed to divide Canada into an Upper and a Lower Province, "the former for the English and American settlers, the lower for the Canadians."

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 503, 627.

[2] "Dropmore P.," i, 507 (Grenville to Thurlow, 12th September 1789).

The inconveniences that might result to the minority in the latter province would, he hoped, be averted by the election of a House of Assembly, which would propose measures, acting therein conjointly with a Legislative Council, of members nominated for life. As it has been stated that Pitt avowed his intention to create two provinces whose mutual jealousies would prevent rebellion, it is desirable to notice that in this first speech he insisted that separation would be the only means of ending the existing strifes and of according to each of them the blessings of the English Constitution.[1] We may also remark that Pitt seems to have paid no heed to the suggestion that the Lower Province might be governed autocratically, while Upper Canada had representative institutions. This would become impossible when the French *habitans* gained political consciousness; and Pitt was surely right in rejecting that makeshift.

His policy was, however, to be sharply criticized, especially by the British minority in Lower Canada. In a petition dated London, 15th March 1791 (which is printed in full in "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies"), seven firms engaged in the Canada trade pointed out the defects of the measure; and it is highly significant that some of their objections foreshadowed those which were to be so ably set forth in Lord Durham's Report on Canada (1839). The petition was drafted by Lymburner, a Quebec merchant who had drawn up that of 1784. The Memorialists declared that the Bill before Parliament would perpetuate many of the worst evils of the Quebec Act, which sprang from the attempt to impose one code of laws on two peoples differing widely in their manner of life, customs, and needs. They asserted that the only means of soothing the strifes was to apply English law to the English population and French law to the French; that any division of the colony would be artificial and would debar Upper Canada from maritime trade. The petition concluded with the statesmanlike suggestion that the only cure for the ills of Canada was to merge her two peoples in a self-governing community.

Already Dorchester had offered objections to the proposed division of Canada; but Grenville in his despatch of 20th October 1789 set aside his arguments on the ground that, while weighty as against the present non-representative system, they did not apply to that which was about to be proposed.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 1377-79.

> When (he wrote) the resolution was taken of establishing a Provincial Legislature, . . . to be chosen in part by the people, every consideration of policy seemed to render it desirable that the great preponderance possessed in the Upper Districts by the King's antient subjects, and in the lower by the French Canadians, should have this effect and operation in separate Legislatures, rather than that these two bodies of people should be blended together in the first formation of the new Constitution, and before sufficient time has been allowed for the removal of antient prejudices, by the habit of obedience to the same Government and by the sense of a common interest.[1]

These words imply not so much distrust of the colonists as a sense of the need of proceeding tentatively with what was a novel departure. It is clear that Ministers looked on the proposed arrangements as more or less provisional, and in the last phrases we seem to catch a glimpse of a more peaceful future when reunion would be the natural step. For the present, Grenville continued, it would be well to strengthen the Governor's Legislative Council by according to its members some title of honour (a baronetage was first hinted at) which would attach them to the new institutions. Another desirable step was the reservation of Crown Lands in the new districts, in order to provide the Government with a fixed and improving revenue. Grenville even suggested that, had this been done in the original thirteen colonies, a cause of friction and revolt would have been removed.

Ministers must have had a deep sense of the advantages of their proposal when they disregarded the advice of the Governor-General and the firm opposition of the British settlers in Lower Canada and of their connections in London. The measure was pushed on, despite a long speech against it by Lymburner at the bar of the House, in which he asserted that the division of the provinces, when once accomplished, could never be reversed —an assertion falsified by facts in 1841. The debates on the subject were rendered memorable by an incident which will be described later (Chapter XXIV). Burke had persisted in dragging the French Revolution into the discussion, and, when interrupted by Fox, passionately declared that the friendship between them was at an end. As for the question before the House, Fox opposed, while Burke defended, the proposed division of Canada. The Whig leader further objected to the proposal to make a legislative councillorship an hereditary honour; and he urged Ministers to increase the size of the Houses of Assembly. Pitt carried his proposal that they should number sixteen for the Upper Province and fifty for the Lower. Finally the House agreed to leave open the question of the hereditary tenure of councillorships; and it is noteworthy that no hereditary title was conferred. The Bill became law on 14th May 1791.

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[1] "Report on Canadian Archives," by D. Brymer (Ottawa, 1891).

To discuss the suitability of this measure to Canada would involve a recital of events in that colony down to the time of Lord Durham's famous Report of 1839. All that concerns us here is the question of Pitt's attitude towards those complex problems. His conduct cannot be pronounced hasty or doctrinaire. Not until official evidence and advice were forthcoming did he and his colleagues sketch the first outlines of the scheme. But when he had made up his mind, he held on his way with resolute purpose. This will appear if we remember that three Ministers were successively responsible for the Bill. Sydney drafted it. Grenville revised the evidence and recast the Bill;[1] but it fell to Henry Dundas to amend it and carry it into execution. As the Bill was but little changed, we may infer that one mind was at all times paramount.

Canadian historians have generally allowed that the motives of Pitt were enlightened; and, the assertion sometimes made, that they were based on a resolve to make use of the hostility of French and British settlers so as to prevent revolt, is contradicted by all that is known of his manly and hopeful nature. His speeches ring with a feeling of confidence in the healing effect of representative institutions; and it should be remembered that, if in 1837 they were found inadequate to the needs of the progressive Upper Province, they yet nursed that little community into youth. This is all that can be expected from a measure which was necessarily tentative.[2] The chief objections against his division of the provinces were that it tended to weaken the British community in the Lower Province, while it also cut off the Upper Province from the sea and placed it at the mercy of the Customs' laws framed at Quebec.

To this it may be replied that, even if the infant settlements of the Upper St. Lawrence had remained bound up with the

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 496, 497.

[2] See some good remarks on this by Sir C. P. Lucas, *op. cit.*, 268-70.

French districts, the English-speaking population would still have been in a decided minority, and that it was better to allow the United Empire Loyalists to carve out their own destiny, as they were doing in New Brunswick, in the hope that time would bring about an equipoise between the two peoples. The erection of a new Customs' barrier was truly a serious matter; but it resulted from geographical and racial conditions which were irreversible, save by the Act of Union, which, under happier auspices, came exactly half a century later. In the period 1791-1841 Upper Canada grew from a population of about 10,000 to 465,000; and in that fact may be found the best justification for Pitt's Canadian policy. When looked at from the point of view of 1791, it seems to deserve higher praise than has generally been its meed.

CHAPTER XX

THE SLAVE TRADE

Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free;
They touch our country, and their shackles fall;
That 's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it then,
And let it circulate through every vein
Of all your Empire—that where Britain's power
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.
COWPER.

GREAT movements are too often connected with the names of one or two prominent men, to the neglect of others whose services are highly meritorious. Laziness rather than unfairness may be assigned as the cause of this mistake. The popular consciousness, unable to hold together names, according to gradation of merit, settles on one or two as convenient pegs for the memory, and discards the remainder. Hence it comes about that commanders acquire undying fame which may be due to their chiefs of staff; and statesmen are reputed the authors of measures which they accepted doubtfully from their permanent officials.

It is by some such process of hasty labelling that the name of Wilberforce is often affixed alone to the movement for the liberation of the slaves. True, he deserves to hold a very high place in the roll-call of the champions of philanthropy. But the following short summary will suffice to suggest that many other names, now wellnigh forgotten, deserve to be held in equal honour. Of those who helped to arouse public opinion on this question George Fox and William Edmundson come first in point of time. They lifted up their voice in and after the year 1671 against the cruelties inflicted on negro slaves in Barbadoes and elsewhere; but we do not find that their views on slavery affected a large number of their co-religionists until the year 1727, when the Society of Friends in their annual meeting at London passed a resolution condemning both the slave trade and the owning of slaves.[1] This conviction spread to the Quakers of Pennsylvania (the "Quaker State") where worthy members of the Society succeeded in arousing public opinion even against the institution of slavery.

Reverting to England, with which alone we are concerned, we find the Quakers striving to stop the worst abuses of the Slave Trade. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) had handed over to England a great part of that traffic; and Chatham himself boasted that his conquests in Africa during the Seven Years' War had placed almost the whole of it in British hands. When a man of his elevation of thought held this language, we can imagine that the many looked on the trade as a pillar of the Empire, and derided its few opponents as lunatics.

Not that public opinion was wholly blind to its evils. In the year 1750 Parliament had passed an Act forbidding the kidnapping of negroes; but it proved wholly ineffective; and, as the horrors connected with the Slave Trade became better known, the Society of Friends warned all its members to abstain from any connection whatever with so unholy a traffic (1758). Three years later it resolved to disown any who should disregard this warning.[2] Thus, to the religious zeal and consistency of the Friends we are indebted for the first attempts to abolish this traffic. No small community has ever rendered a greater service to the cause of religion and humanity.

It should be noted in passing that their action and that of later abolitionists helped to link together these two ideals in a manner which was to be infinitely fruitful. In this connection Granville Sharp, John Wesley, Clarkson, Paley, Wilberforce, Buxton, Zachary Macaulay, and many others may be named as proving the close union that subsisted between religious conviction and the philanthropic movement. The power of religion to impel to good works shone forth in all of them. Wilberforce gave scarcely a thought to the slaves until the work of grace began in his own heart. In 1774 Wesley published his work,

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[1] Clarkson, "Hist. of the Abolition of the Slave Trade," i, 110-113. See p. 259 for a chart showing the names of those who had protested against the Trade from the times of Charles V, Ximenes, and G. Fox.

[2] *Ibid.*, 114, 115.

"Thoughts upon Slavery," which greatly furthered the cause. Indeed, it should be noticed as one of the influences marking off the philanthropic movement in England from that of France that here for the most part it was an offshoot of the Evangelical Revival, whereas in France the efforts of Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists imparted to similar efforts a strongly anti-Catholic bias. These facts were destined to mould the future of religion and politics in the two lands. Here philanthropists and statesmen were the mainstay of religion. There the slow cessation of persecution and the reluctant abandonment of privileges by the Roman Church ranged social reformers against her, with results that were to appear in the Revolution.

Fortunately, in England law reinforced the efforts of philanthropists. In 1772, Chief Justice Mansfield gave a decision that a slave who landed on English soil became a free man. The case arose out of the conduct of a West India merchant settled in London, who by sheer brutality had rendered a slave useless for work, had turned him adrift, but again claimed him when healed by a kind-hearted physician. Granville Sharp thenceforth made it the business of his life to see justice done to the negro race, and was chiefly instrumental in bringing the whole question to a practical issue by founding in 1787 the first Abolitionist Society.

Before adverting to its labours, with which Pitt so deeply sympathized, we may notice a few facts connected with the traffic in human flesh. The evidence of Robert Norris, of Liverpool, before a Parliamentary Commission in the year 1775 showed that of the 74,000 negroes believed to be taken annually from Africa to the New World, British ships carried about 38,000; French, 20,000; Portuguese, 10,000; Dutch, 4,000; Danish, 2,000. The greater part came from Bonny, New Calabar, the Gold Coast, and Loango. Gambia is credited with exporting only 700, a suspiciously low estimate. The same witness asserted that only one slave in twenty-seven died on the voyage, while one seaman in sixteen succumbed.[1] Estimates, however, varied very greatly. Macpherson gave 97,000 as the number of slaves imported into the New World from Africa in the year 1768.[2] Efforts were made by merchants to depict the passage on the ocean as pleasant, amusements being provided on the way.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 18272 (on the Slave Trade).

[2] Macpherson, "Annals of Commerce," iii, 484.

But it soon transpired that the chief amusement was compulsory singing, while the "dancing" proved to be jumping in chains at the sound of the lash. It was also known that very many negroes died soon after landing during the process known as seasoning to the climate and work; that the whip was freely used in the plantations; and that the mortality among the slaves was extremely heavy. In this connection the name of Burke deserves to be held in honour; for he proposed that the Attorney-General in each colony should be empowered to act as Protector of the negroes.

Thus, even before the Abolitionist Society began its labours, public opinion was beginning to brand the traffic with infamy. The year 1783 saw efforts made in Parliament to repress some of its worst abuses; and the Society of Friends then sent up the first petition for the total abrogation of the traffic in British vessels.[1] The year 1785 witnessed the publication of Clarkson's Latin essay on the subject; and a twelvemonth later it came out in English. In 1783 also the efforts of the Rev. James Ramsay, Rector of Teston, Kent, who had seen the evils of slavery during his residence at St. Kitt's, brought the subject home to the mind of his neighbour, Lady Middleton; and she in her turn impressed it as a Christian duty on Wilberforce to bring forward a motion in Parliament. As this appeal harmonized with the strong religious convictions now swaying the nature of the young member for Yorkshire, he felt strongly moved to take up the cause of the negroes. In the year 1786 he made many inquiries among African and West India merchants, and found much error in their information. After probing the matter, he resolved to consult Pitt as to his making this question the chief object of his life.

The conversation took place under an old oak-tree in Pitt's grounds at Holwood, above the steep descent into Keston vale. The opinions of the two friends, as we have seen, had somewhat diverged. Pitt did not sympathize with the pietism which now dominated the life of Wilberforce; but his religion was of a working type, and he may have welcomed the growth of convictions of a more practical kind, which would wean his friend from excessive introspection. Certain it is that he urged him to take up the cause of the slaves as one well suited to his character and talents. Wilberforce therefore resolved to give notice of his intention to bring the subject before Parliament. Would that we knew the details of that conversation illustrative of the character of two of the most interesting men of the age. Even so, the resolve there formed renders illustrious the tree under which it was formed, fitly called "Wilberforce's oak."[1]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxiii, 1026.

The three strands of effort which we have traced from their feeble beginnings, viz., those originating with the Quakers, Granville Sharp, and Ramsay, were now to combine. In 1787, as we have seen, Granville Sharp, in connection with London Friends, formed a "Committee for procuring Evidence on the Slave Trade," which was to become the famous Abolitionist Society. At the first meeting on 22nd May 1787, only ten were present. Their names deserve to be recorded. Granville Sharp (Chairman), J. Barton, Thomas Clarkson, W. Dillwyn, S. Hoare (junr.), J. Hooper, J. Lloyd, R. Phillips, P. Sanson, J. Woods. All but two were Quakers, and the minutes and letters abound in "thous" and "thees." One of the aims of the Committee was to distribute Clarkson's and other pamphlets on the subject. In October 1787 the Committee received a letter from Brissot and Clavière, the future leaders of the French Girondins, expressing the wish to promote their views in France, where, as is well known, the abolitionists achieved a speedy but illusory triumph in 1790.

As there has been some controversy respecting the initiation of this movement, it is well to note that not until 30th October 1787 did the Committee receive a letter from Wilberforce. He then asked for information as speedily as possible. The Minutes of the Committee show that he was not a member until the year 1794, and it is an exaggeration to say that "he directed their endeavours."[2] Their aim was to stir up the great towns to petition to Parliament. In this they achieved a marked success. Indeed, it was rather the formation of a strong public opinion by the labours of the Committee, than the many motions in Parliament, which at last brought triumph to the cause. Manchester and Birmingham soon displayed great interest in the subject. A kindred society was formed at the latter town. That at London grew in importance, and funds came in rapidly.

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 151; for a photograph of the tree see "Private Papers of W. Wilberforce," 17.

[2] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 152. The Minute Books of the Committee are in the B.M. Add. MSS., 21254, 21255.

Wilberforce wrote to Eden on 18th January 1788: "The fire is kindled in various parts of the Kingdom and the flame spreads wider and wider."[1] One of the petitions resulting from the labours of the parent committee deserves mention here. It came from 769 freemen cutlers of Sheffield, was dated 24th April 1789, and stated that, though the exports of petitioners to the African coast might fall off if the Slave Trade were abolished, yet they were so convinced of its inhumanity that they begged Parliament to sweep it away.[2]

Petitions of the same tenour had long been coming in, and Pitt therefore instituted an inquiry by the Privy Council respecting the whole question, including the condition of the slaves in the colonies.[3] One of the replies, that from Bermuda, of 10th June 1788, is typically optimistic. Governor Browne affirmed that the slaves in those islands were exceedingly well treated. Out of 4,900 slaves not more than five a year deserted. During the late war many had served on privateers and, when captured and taken to the United States, nearly all managed to make their way back to their masters. This report is a specimen of the arguments which compelled Ministers to some measure of caution.[4]

There is, however, abundant proof that Pitt, though a recent recruit to the movement, espoused it with enthusiasm. During the difficult negotiations with France in the autumn of 1787, we find Wilberforce informing Eden, our envoy at Paris, of Pitt's interest in the endeavour to stop the Slave Trade, a matter which would be greatly facilitated if France would agree to take the same step.[5] On 2nd November Pitt followed up his friend's letter by another appeal to Eden to induce the French Government "to discontinue the villainous traffic now carried on in Africa."[6] The following letter, hitherto unpublished, from Pitt to Eden, further shows his hope that Eden, who was soon to take the embassy at Madrid, would be able to influence that Court also:

Downing Street, *Dec.* 7, 1787.[7]

Mr. Wilberforce has communicated to me your last letter respecting the African business. The more I reflect upon it, the more anxious and

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[1] "Auckland Journals," i, 307.

[2] Pitt MSS., 310.

[3] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 166.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] "Auckland Journals," i, 240.

[6] *Ibid.*, i, 267.

[7] Pitt MSS., 102. For Eden's reply, see "Auckland Journals," i, 285.

> impatient I am that the business should be brought as speedily as possible to a point; that, if the real difficulties of it can be overcome, it may not suffer from the prejudices and interested objections which will multiply during the discussion. Of course it cannot yet be ripe for any official communication; and when you transmit the memorandum, which I see you were to draw up, I hope it will be quite secret for the present. If you see any chance of success in France, I hope you will lay your ground as soon as possible with a view to Spain also. I am considering what to do in Holland, but the course of business there makes the secrecy, which is necessary at least for a time, more difficult.

The reply of the French Government in January 1788 was discouraging. Montmorin and his colleagues avowed their sympathy with the cause, but, fearing that it would not succeed in England, refused to commit themselves.[1] The advent of Necker to power in August aroused Pitt's hopes;[2] but he too temporized, thereby prejudicing the success of the cause in these islands. Spain refused to stir in the matter.

Meanwhile Wilberforce had given notice of a motion on the subject, but a severe illness in February and March 1788 left him in a state of weakness which precluded the least effort. Before leaving for Bath, he begged Pitt to bring forward the motion for him. The Prime Minister consented, says Wilberforce, "with a warmth of principle and friendship that have made me love him better than I ever did before." Nevertheless he acted with caution. Up to the beginning of the year 1788, at least, he had not brought the matter before the Cabinet, probably because he knew that most of its members would oppose him. In the country also a formidable opposition was arising, and, as usually happens in such cases, enthusiasts clamoured at delay as treason to the cause.[3] Perhaps it was this which led him to request a conference with Sharp. It took place on 21st April, and is thus reported in the Minutes of the Committee:

> He [Granville Sharp] had a full opportunity of explaining that the desire of the Committee went to a full abolition of the Slave Trade. Mr. Pitt assured him that his heart was with us, and that he considered himself pledged to Mr. Wilberforce that the cause should not sustain any injury from his indisposition; but at the same time that the subject

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[1] "Auckland Journals," i, 307.

[2] "Dropmore P.," i, 353.

[3] "Auckland Journals," i, 304; "Life of Wilberforce," i, 170. See Pitt's letter of consent of 8th April 1788, in "Private Papers of W. Wilberforce," 17-19.

was of great political importance, and it was requisite to proceed in the business with temper and prudence. He did not apprehend, as the examination before the Privy Council would yet take up some time, that the subject could be fully investigated in the present session of Parliament, but said he would consider whether the forms of the House would admit of any measures that would be obligatory on them to take it up early in the ensuing session.[1]

On 9th May Pitt brought his motion before the House, but pending the conclusion of the official inquiry, he offered no opinion on the subject, for which he was sharply twitted by Fox and Burke. His conduct was far from pleasing to the more ardent spirits. One of them, the venerable Sir William Dolben, member for the University of Oxford, after inspecting a slave-ship in the Thames, determined to lose no time in alleviating the misery of the many living cargoes that crossed the ocean. He therefore brought in a Bill for temporarily regulating the transport of slaves in British ships. In the course of the discussions Pitt declared that, even though the proposed regulations involved the trade in ruin, as was maintained, he would nevertheless vote for them; and if the trade could not be regulated, he would vote for its abolition as "shocking to humanity, abominable to be carried on by any country, and which reflected the greatest dishonour on the British Senate and the British nation." He further startled the House by proposing that the regulations should become operative from that day—10th June. The hold which he had on members was shown by the division, fifty-six voting for the measure and only five against it. In the Upper House no minister save the Duke of Richmond ventured to defend this unusual enactment; and the Chancellor, Thurlow, spoke strongly against it. Sydney also opposed it, though with moderation (25th June). Pitt's feelings when he heard of their action are shown in a phrase of his letter to Grenville, dated Cambridge, 29th June, that if the Bill failed he and the opposers would not remain members of the same Cabinet. This declaration does honour to his heart and his judgement. It proves the warmth of his feelings on the subject and his sense of the need of discipline in the Cabinet. Had the measure failed to pass the Lords, a Cabinet crisis of the gravest kind would have arisen. As it was, however, the great efforts put forth by Pitt among his friends sufficed to carry the day against Thurlow by a majority of two. We catch a glimpse of what an average man thought of this incident in the pages of Wraxall. After adverting to the nobility of Pitt's motives and the strength of Thurlow's arguments against the retrospective action of the Bill, the chronicler thus passes judgement: "Thurlow argued as a statesman, Pitt acted as a moralist." We also have the warrant of Wraxall for stating that, not until George III gave his assent to the measure, did Pitt "allow" him to prorogue Parliament.[1]

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 21255.

Ship-owners and slave-owners had, however, been driven only from the first outwork of their citadel, and had time to strengthen their defences before the matter came up again in 1789. After a delay, caused by the King's malady and by the length of the inquiry into the Slave Trade by a committee of the Privy Council, Wilberforce brought the question before the House on 12th May in one of the ablest and most eloquent speeches of that age. For three and a half hours he held the attention of the House as he recounted the horrors which slave-hunting spread through Africa, and the hell of suffering of the middle passage. He showed how legitimate trade would increase with the growth of confidence between man and man in that Continent, and he asserted that the sympathies of King Louis XVI, Necker, and the French nation would probably lead that country to follow our example in abolishing a traffic degrading to all concerned in it. He then proved from official information concerning the slaves in our West India islands, that wise treatment of them and suppression of vice would ensure a sufficient increase of population to meet the needs of the planters. He concluded by moving twelve resolutions setting forth the facts of the case as detailed in the Report of the Privy Council. This mode of procedure earned general approval. Burke bestowed his blessing on the proposal (for such it was in effect) to abolish so hateful a traffic. Pitt gave the measure his warm approval, but stated that he was prepared to give a hearing to all objections. One such he noticed, namely, that foreign nations would step in and secretly supply our West India islands with slaves. He declared that Great Britain was strong enough to prevent so insidious a device; but he hoped, rather, that other peoples would desire to share in the honour of abolishing the trade; and we might confidently negotiate with them to that end, or wait for the effect which our example would produce. Fox followed in the same strain, and prophesied that France would soon "catch a spark from our fire and run a race with us in promoting the ends of humanity."[1]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxvii, 495-506, 598; "Dropmore P.," i, 342; Wraxall, v, 146, 149.

But these unanswerable arguments were of no avail against shippers, slave-owners, and colonial traders. In vain did Wilberforce point out that the prosperity of Liverpool did not depend upon the Slave Trade; for the tonnage of the slave-ships was only one-fifteenth of that of the whole port. Liverpool saw nothing but ruin ahead; and it must be admitted that that class of traffic was then by far the most lucrative to the growing city on the Mersey. It has been computed that in the decade 1783-93, Liverpool slave-ships made 878 "round voyages" (*i.e.* from Liverpool to the Guinea Coast, thence to the West Indies, and back to the Mersey), carried 303,737 slaves and sold them for £15,186,850.[2] It is not surprising, then, that Clarkson was mobbed when he went there to collect evidence as to the terrible mortality of our seamen engaged in the trade,[3] and was known to be purchasing "mouth-openers," those ingenious devices by which slavers forced open the mouths of those of their victims who sought release by voluntary starvation. Bristol, though it had only eighteen ships in the trade, was also up in arms; for it depended largely on the refining of sugar and the manufacture of rum. Even the veteran reformer, Alderman Sawbridge, foresaw ruin for his constituency, the City of London, if the trade were further interfered with. Persons of a rhetorical turn depicted in lurid colours the decay of Britain's mercantile marine, the decline of her wealth, and the miseries of a sugar famine. Others sought to frighten the timid by declaring that, as shippers and planters had embarked large sums of money in the trade in reliance on Parliament, they were entitled to absolutely full compensation for the heavy losses which must result from its abolition or further curtailment.[4] In short, all the menaces, based on assumed legal rights, were set forth with vehemence and pertinacity.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 41-75.

[2] Prof. Ramsay Muir, "Hist. of Liverpool," 193.

[3] *Ibid.*, 56. Out of 3,170 men who sailed in the slavers from Liverpool in 1787, 642 died and 1,100 were got rid of or deserted in the West Indies.

[4] See a curious letter in "Woodfall's Register" for 12th June 1789, in answer to authentic accounts of the horrors of the Slave Trade lately given in that paper by C. D. Wadstrom.

The result was seen in the increasing acrimony of the opponents of abolition in Parliament. They poured scorn on the evidence adduced before the Privy Council in a way which brought from Pitt a sharp retort, but they insisted, and with success, on the hearing of evidence at the bar of the House. These dilatory tactics protracted the discussion until it was necessary to postpone it to the next year.

Before the end of the session of 1789 an important change came about in the Cabinet. Sydney had long disagreed with Pitt respecting the Slave Trade, and therefore, early in June, offered his resignation. There could be but one opinion as to his successor. William Wyndham Grenville had long shown high capacity both in diplomatic affairs and more recently in his conduct of the Speakership of the House. His speech on the trade marked him out as a strong supporter of Pitt; and on 5th June he became Secretary of State for Home Affairs with a seat in the Cabinet. His accession was a gain for the Administration and a further source of strength for Pitt, who had long felt great confidence in his judgement and tact.[1] Henry Addington, son of the physician who long attended the first Earl of Chatham, was chosen Speaker of the House of Commons by a large majority over the Whig nominee, Sir Gilbert Elliot.

One other change ought to have taken place. The language used by Lord Thurlow against Pitt had long been petulant, and his irritation against the abolitionists led him to strange lengths in the summer of 1789.[2] Their differences caused an almost complete rupture. But, for the present, Pitt could not insist on his resignation. On the question now at issue George III agreed with Thurlow.[3] He also seems to have been quite unaware of the shifty course adopted by the Chancellor at the beginning of his late malady and believed him to be thoroughly devoted to his person. It argues no small amount of self-restraint and honourable reticence in Pitt that he should have taken no steps to inform the King of the meditated defection of Thurlow. George III therefore continued to believe in the whole hearted devotion of the Lord Chancellor; and on two occasions during the year 1789 he wrote to Pitt expressing his desire that the two Ministers should endeavour to work together cordially for the good of the realm.[1] It is consonant with what we know of Thurlow's character that he presumed on the King's partiality towards him, and played the part of the one necessary man in a way highly exasperating to Pitt. But the precarious state of the King's health and his known dislike of dismissing old servants availed to postpone the inevitable rupture until the year 1792. The retention of Thurlow may be considered one of the causes of the failure of the abolitionists at this time.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 278.

[2] *Ibid.*, i, 487.

[3] "Auckland Journals," i, 221; Wraxall, v, 139.

In the spring of the year 1790 the champions of the Slave Trade believed that they saw signs of waning enthusiasm on the part of the public, and on 23rd April sought to stop the further examination of witnesses at the bar of the House. Wilberforce, Fox, and Pitt protested against these tactics, but Pitt intimated that he did not consider the question one which Ministers were pledged to support. The case for a free and full inquiry was overwhelming, and it was continued. That Pitt acted in close connection with Fox on this whole question appears by his letter to Wilberforce on 22nd April, which further shows that he also considered the evidence so voluminous and important as to afford little hope of the question being disposed of in that session.[2]

This was most unfortunate. The friends of abolition never had a better opportunity than in the early part of 1790. Later on in that year the risk of war with Spain (see Chapter XXIV) and the prospect of a revolt of the slaves in the French West Indies began to turn Britons against a measure which, they were told, would weaken the mercantile marine and lead to the loss of the West Indies. In this case, as in many others, the influence of the French Revolution militated against the cause of steady reform in England. The National Assembly had early declared the principle of freedom of the slaves in the French colonies; but owing to the violent opposition of the planters and merchants, the decree remained a dead letter. In the spring of 1790 the question came up once more; but again the majority sought to shelve the question. Lord Robert Stephen Fitzgerald, the British envoy at Paris, commended the prudence and self-restraint of the Assembly "in not agitating the two great questions concerning the emancipation of the negroes and the abolition of the Slave Trade, which had at the first setting out raised so violent a spirit of party."[1] The planters and West India merchants still threatened that the Colonial Assemblies (established in the year 1787) would declare their independence if those decrees were passed, on the ground that they were not bound by the acts of the French Assembly. Mirabeau, along with all practical statesmen, forebore from pressing the point; and it is highly probable that the politic caution of the French reformers, despite their sensibility and enthusiasm, told upon public opinion in England.

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[1] Stanhope, ii, App., ix, xi.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 711-14; "Life of Wilberforce," i, 266, 267. The evidence ran to 1400 folio pages (*ibid.*, i, 281).

Such were the discouraging conditions amidst which a General Election was held in the summer of 1790. It increased Pitt's hold on the House of Commons; but, as he had refrained from making the Slave Trade a ministerial question, the result did not imply the victory of abolition. In the month of November he took a step which furthered the prospects of the cause. He recommended Grenville for the peerage as Baron Grenville, partly in recognition of his services, but mainly because he needed a trusty friend and capable debater in the Upper House as a check on Thurlow. He assured Wilberforce that distrust of the Lord Chancellor was the true reason that prompted the transfer of Grenville to the Lords.[2] We find Pitt writing on 24th November 1790 to his mother in high spirits. He hoped for great things from Grenville in the Upper House. As for "prophets of schisms," they would be refuted. The opening of the new Parliament would find the Ministry in "more strength than has belonged to us since the beginning of the Government."[3]

The question came before Parliament on 18th and 19th April 1791, when Wilberforce in a masterly way summarized the official evidence and moved for leave to bring in a Bill abolishing the Slave Trade. Some of the arguments on the other side were curious. Grosvenor admitted that the trade was an "unamiable" one, but he declined to "gratify his humanity at the expense of the interests of his country, and thought we should not too curiously inquire into the unpleasant circumstances with which it was perhaps attended." Less finnikin was the objection raised by Lord John Russell and others, that, if we suppressed the trade, France, Spain, and Holland would step in to take it up. This and the question of vested interests formed the only reply to Wilberforce, Fox, and Pitt. The Prime Minister declared that he had never been more interested in the fate of any proposal than the present one. He brushed aside the pleas of opponents, as wholly untenable, "unless gentlemen will in the first place prove to me that there are no laws of morality binding upon nations, and that it is no duty of a Legislature to restrain its subjects from invading the happiness of other countries and from violating the fundamental principles of justice." He then proved from the statistics then available that the numbers of the slaves in the West Indies would under proper treatment increase in such a degree as to supply the labour needed for the plantations, without bringing ruin upon Africa. But argument and reasoning were useless. Mammon carried the day by 163 to 88.[1]

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[1] "F. O.," France, 34. Fitzgerald to Leeds, 2nd April 1790.

[2] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 284.

[3] Pitt MSS., 12.

The events of the year 1791 further depressed the hopes of philanthropists. After much wobbling on the subject the National Assembly of France passed a decree liberating the slaves in French colonies, and granting to them the full rights of citizenship (15th May). The results were disastrous. Already there had been serious trouble in the French West Indies, owing to the progress of democratic ideas among the mulattos and slaves; and the news that they were thenceforth politically the equals of planters and merchants, who had ever resisted their claims, led to terrible risings of the slaves, especially in the west of St. Domingo, where plantations and cities felt the blind fury of their revenge. By the end of the year the most flourishing colony of France was a wreck.[2]

The heedless haste of French reformers worked ruin far and wide. Extremes are fatal to the happy mean; for the populace rarely takes the trouble to distinguish between reckless innovation and the healing of a palpable grievance. Among the unfortunate results of the French Revolution not the least was the tendency to extremes of feeling produced by it in France and all neighbouring peoples. Those who approved its doctrines generally became giddy with enthusiasm; those who disapproved turned livid with hatred. Burke in his "Reflections on the French Revolution" had lately set the example of treating the whole subject in a crusading spirit. The flood of sentimentality, unloosed by that attractive work, was now near high-water mark; and for a space the age of chivalry seemed about to return.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 250-359.

[2] "Hist. de la Rév. à Saint Domingue," by A. M. Delmas. 2 vols. Paris, 1814; "Hist. Survey of . . . San Domingo," by Bryan Edwards. 1797.

The news of the horrors at St. Domingo came opportunely to double the force of his prophecies. The cause of the slaves suffered untold harm.[1] Any change in existing customs was dubbed treason to the Commonwealth. Men did not stop to contrast the rash methods of the *Amis des Noirs* with those advocated by Pitt. Still less did they ask how the stoppage of the importation of infuriated negroes into the West Indian colonies, and the more humane treatment of those who were there, could lead to a servile revolt. Wilberforce was fain to exclaim that nothing was so cruel as sensibility. His campaign against the Slave Trade made little or no progress in the early part of 1792. "People here," he wrote, "are all panic-struck with the transactions in St. Domingo and the apprehension, or pretended apprehension, of the like in Jamaica." Many friends advised him to postpone all further action for a year until the panic was over. Among these was Pitt, so we may judge from the curt reference of Wilberforce to what went on at an informal committee meeting on the subject: "Pitt threw out against Slave motion, on St. Domingo account." He also speaks of a slackening of their cordiality.

The folly of Clarkson in advocating Jacobinical ideas at a meeting held at the Crown and Anchor in the Strand further damaged the cause. Nevertheless, detestation of the Slave Trade was still very keen. Friends of the slaves began to forswear sugar and take to honey. Petitions against the traffic in human flesh poured in at St. Stephen's; and those who spoke of delay were held to be backsliders. This is the sense which we must attach to a phrase in a letter sent to Wilberforce: "From London to Inverness Mr. Pitt's sincerity is questioned, and unless he can convince the nation of his cordiality in our cause, his popularity must suffer greatly."[2] The questioning was needless. Pitt considered the time inopportune for bringing the motion before a Parliament which had already rejected it. When, however, Wilberforce persisted, he gave him his enthusiastic support.

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 295-6, 340, 342.

[2] *Ibid.*, i, 344.

The debate of 2nd April 1792 was remarkable in more ways than one. The opponents of the measure now began to shift their ground. Colonel Tarleton, member for Liverpool, continued to harp on the ruin that must befall his town; but others, notably Dundas, and the Speaker (Addington) admitted the evils of the trade, and the probability that in a few years the needs of the planters might be met from the negro population already in the islands. Dundas therefore moved an amendment in favour of a "moderate" reform, or a "gradual" reform. Fox manfully castigated this proposal, which assumed that there might be moderation in murder. Nevertheless Jenkinson (the future Earl of Liverpool) made a trimming speech in favour of regulating, not abolishing, the trade.

Pitt then arose. The rays of dawn were already lighting up the windows on the east when he began his memorable speech. First, he expressed his satisfaction that members were generally agreed as to the abolition of the traffic being only a question of time. Mankind would therefore before long be delivered "from the severest and most extensive calamity recorded in the history of the world." Grappling with the arguments of Jenkinson and Dundas, he proceeded to show that the immediate abolition of the Slave Trade would in many ways be an advantage to the West Indies, as it would restrict the often excessive outlay of the planters and deliver our colonies from the fear of servile insurrections like that of St. Domingo. Planters must rely upon the natural increase of the black population which would accelerate under good treatment. If, said he, that population decreases, it can be only from ill treatment. If it is increasing, there is no need for a trade which involves a frightful loss of life both on sea and in the process of "seasoning" the human freitage in the West Indies.

Adverting to the Act of 1750, which was claimed as authorizing the trade, Pitt proved from its wording that the supply of negroes for our colonies was then deemed to be essential, and that a clause of it, which was continually violated, expressly forbade the use of fraud or violence in the procuring of the cargo. But, even if that law rendered the trade legal, had any Legislature a right to sanction fraud and violence? As well might a man think himself bound by a promise to commit murder. He next scouted the argument that, if we gave up the trade, other peoples would rush in and take our place. Would France, now that she had abolished slavery? Would Denmark, seeing that she had resolved gradually to abolish the trade? As to other lands, it was more probable that they would follow the example soon to be set by this land.

Having traversed the statements of opponents, Pitt raised the whole question to a higher level by reminding the House of the export of slaves from Britain to Rome, and by reconstructing with mordant irony the arguments of Roman senators on its behalf, as a legitimate and useful device for using the surplus population of a hopelessly barbarous people. Warming to his theme, he thrilled his hearers by contrasting the state of these islands, had they continued to supply the Roman slave-mart, with the freedom, happiness, and civilization that now were their lot. He besought members, as they valued these blessings, to see to it that they were extended to Africa; and, catching inspiration from the rays of the sun which now lit up the Hall, he pictured the natives of Africa in some not distant future "engaged in the calm occupations of industry, in the pursuits of a just and legitimate commerce. We may behold the beams of science and philosophy breaking in upon their land, which, at some happy period in still later times may blaze with full lustre; and, joining their influence to that of pure religion, may illuminate and invigorate the most distant extremities of that immense Continent. Then may we hope that even Africa, though last of all the quarters of the globe, shall enjoy at length in the evening of her days, those blessings which have descended so plentifully upon us in a much earlier period of the world. Then also will Europe, participating in her improvement and prosperity, receive an ample recompense for the tardy kindness (if kindness it can be called) of no longer hindering that Continent from extricating herself out of the darkness, which, in other more fortunate regions, has been so much more speedily dispelled:

> Nos . . . primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis,
> Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper."[1]

Continuing in this lofty strain, in which enthusiasm and learning, reason and art, voice and gestures, enforced the pleadings of a noble nature, he avowed his faith in the cause of immediate abolition of the Slave Trade. The House thought otherwise. By

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[1] Virg. "Georg.," i, 250: "On us the rising sun first breathed with panting steeds, there ruddy Vesper full late kindles his fires."

192 votes to 125 it accepted Dundas's amendment in favour of gradual abolition.[1] So far do the dictates of self-interest outweigh with many men those of righteousness and mercy, even when these are reinforced by the most moving appeals. Fox, Grey, and Windham agreed that Pitt's speech was one of the most extraordinary displays of eloquence ever heard. If such was the opinion of opponents, we may imagine the impression produced on friends. Wilberforce declared that the speaker was as if inspired when he spoke of the hope of civilizing Africa —a topic which he (Wilberforce) had suggested to him on the previous morning.[2]

The outcome was not wholly disappointing. Three weeks later Dundas brought forward his resolutions for a gradual abolition of the trade. Wilberforce and Pitt failed to induce the House to fix 1st January 1795; but they carried it with them for 1st January 1796, though Dundas proposed a date four years later. The House of Lords, however, in deference to the speeches of the Duke of Clarence, and Lords Hawkesbury and Thurlow, proceeded to involve the whole question in uncertainty by deciding to hear the evidence on it at their own bar (8th May, 1792). Some votes were decided by Thurlow's asseveration that this would not involve delay. The Archbishop of Canterbury soon came to see his mistake; and after a sleepless night he wrote on 9th May to Pitt that he was tortured by doubts as to the outcome of the affair. "My vote was given under a strong impression from the Chancellor's solemn statement that an examination before a committee of the whole House would not be a cause of delay. . . . My conviction of the necessity of the abolition of the horrid trade is firm and unshaken." He adds that he will explain his vote on the first possible occasion, and hopes that Pitt will show this letter to Grenville and Wilberforce.[3]

The Archbishop ought to have known that, with Thurlow, solemnity was often the cloak of maliciousness. It was so now. The examination of witnesses proceeded very slowly. On 5th June, after hearing only five of them, the Lords decided to postpone the hearing of others until the following year.[1] The dismissal of Thurlow, which (as we see in a later chapter) followed on 15th June 1792, was due in the last instance to his pert censures of Pitt's finance; but it may be ascribed also to his acrimonious opposition to Pitt on the question of abolition, and to his underhand means of defeating him in the House of Lords.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 1133-58.

[2] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 346. Lord Auckland (who, as Mr. Eden, had been a philanthropist) referred sarcastically to Pitt's speech: "Mr. Pitt has raised his imagination to the belief that the trade ought, at all events and risks, to be instantly discontinued. . . . Some people are urging this business upon a mischievous principle" ("Auckland Journals," ii, 400).

[3] Chevening MSS.

Other events also seemed to tell against the philanthropists. The connection of some of them with the Radical clubs, and their use of addresses and petitions to overbear the opposition in Parliament clearly made a bad impression on Pitt. After issuing the royal proclamation against seditious writings in May 1792 he showed his disapproval of their methods; and during the subsequent negotiations for a union with the moderate Whigs, in order to form a truly national administration, he confessed to Loughborough that he must make some concession to the Whig Houses on the question of abolition.[2] This is the first clear sign of his intention to shelve the measure until the return of more settled times.

They were not to come for wellnigh a decade. The declaration of war by the French Republic on 1st February 1793 turned men's minds away from philanthropy to destruction. The results were soon visible. A measure proposed by Wilberforce, to prohibit the supply to foreigners of slaves in British ships, failed to pass the Commons, despite the able speeches of Pitt, Fox, and Francis in its favour (5th June 1793). In the Lords meanwhile the Duke of Clarence (the future William IV) spoke against the original proposal with great bitterness, denouncing the abolitionists as fanatics and hypocrites, and expressly naming Wilberforce among them. This insolence was far from meeting with the chastisement that it deserved; but his words were taken as a sign that the royal family was pledged to the support of the odious traffic.

It may be well to notice here a remarkable effort of the chief abolitionists, and to add a few words about the men themselves. Early in the year 1791 some of them sought to show that under favourable conditions negroes were capable of self-government.

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[1] Clarkson, *op. cit.*, ii, 460.

[2] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 464.

Accordingly they formed a Sierra Leone Committee for the purpose of settling liberated slaves on that part of the coast of West Africa. In the Pitt Papers is a letter of 18th April 1791, from the first overseer, Falconbridge, to Granville Sharp, which the latter forwarded to Pitt, giving a heartrending account of the state of the thirty-six men and twenty women who formed the settlement. Fevers and ulcers were rife. Outrages by white men had made the tribes defiant, and a native chief hard by was far from friendly. Falconbridge adds: "That lump of deformity, the Slave Trade, has so debauched the minds of the natives that they are lost to every principle of honor and honesty. The scenes of iniquity and murder I daily hear of, occasioned by this damnable traffic, make my nature revolt." He had named the bay and village Granville Bay and Town; but, as the latter was already overgrown with bushes, he was planting another at Fora Bay. He concludes—"For God's sake send me a ship of force (warship)."[1] Such were the feeble beginnings of a colony of which Zachary Macaulay was to be the first Governor.

Here, as in other parts of this philanthropic movement, Pitt displayed little or no initiative. To the cause of abolition he gave the support of his eloquence and his influence in Parliament; but he gave no decided lead in these and cognate efforts, a fact which somewhat detracts from his greatness as a statesman in this formative period. The merit of starting the movement and of utilizing new openings belongs to the Quakers, to Granville Sharp, Clarkson, Wilberforce and his friends. The member for Yorkshire had grouped around him at his abode, Broomfield, Clapham Common, or at his town house in Palace Yard, Westminster, a number of zealous workers, among whom Henry Thornton, James Stephen (his brother-in-law), Thomas Babington, and Zachary Macaulay were prominent. His chief correspondents were Dr. Milner (Dean of Carlisle), Lord Muncaster, Sir Charles Middleton, Rev. John Newton, and Hannah More. With these and other members of the Abolitionist Society he was in constant touch; and their zeal for social reform and for the evangelical creed (which led to his Clapham circle being styled the "Clapham Sect") led to great results. In the religious sphere Wilberforce and his friends were largely instrumental in founding the Church Missionary Society (1798) and the Bible

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[1] Pitt MSS., 310. See "Life of Wilberforce," i, 305, 307, 323.

Society (1803). Their efforts on behalf of the poor and the mitigation of the barbarous penal code (a matter ever associated with the name of Romilly) were also to bear good fruit.

For the present all their efforts against the Slave Trade seemed to be in vain. It was pressed on feverishly in the year 1792. Between 5th January and 4th May of that year there sailed from London 8 slave ships, from Bristol 11, from Liverpool 39. The total tonnage was 11,195 tons. Another official return among the Pitt Papers (No. 310) gives the following numbers of slaves taken in British ships from West Africa to the West Indies in the years 1789 to 1795 (the figures for 1790 are wanting):

YEAR.	SLAVES TAKEN.	DIED ON THE VOYAGE.
1789	11,014	1,053
1791	15,108	1,397
1792	26,971	2,468
1793	11,720	869
1794	14,611	394
1795	7,157	224
Total	86,581	6,405

These figures suggest a reason for the falling off of interest in the question after 1792. The trade seemed to be falling off; and the mortality at sea declined as the cargo was less closely packed. This, however, was but a poor argument for not abolishing a trade which was inherently cruel and might revive with the return of peace. In 1794 the Commons seemed friendly to abolition. Pitt, Fox, Whitbread, and other friends of the cause pleaded successfully on behalf of Wilberforce's Bill of the previous year. Once more, however, the influence of the Duke of Clarence, Thurlow, and Lord Abingdon availed to defeat the proposal. Grenville also voted against it as being premature. The Lords proceeded to illustrate the sincerity of their desire for further information on the topic by shelving the whole inquiry.

A sense of despair now began to creep over many friends of the movement. If abolitionist motions could only just pass the Commons, to be at once rejected by the Lords, what hope was there for the slaves? Their cause was further overclouded by the sharp disagreement of Wilberforce and Pitt respecting the war with France. As we shall see in a later chapter, Pitt and the majority of his supporters, together with the Old Whigs, belived that the war must go on until a solid peace could be obtained. Wilberforce and many of the abolitionists thought otherwise. During the latter part of the year 1794 and the first weeks of 1795 the two friends were scarcely on speaking terms; but even during that sad time Pitt wrote to Wilberforce (26th December 1794): "Nothing has happened to add either to my hopes or fears respecting the Slave Question with a view to the issue of it in the next session, but I think the turn things take in France may be favourable to the ultimate abolition." Pitt spoke powerfully against Dundas's amendment in favour of gradual abolition at some time after the conclusion of the war; but these procrastinating tactics carried the day by 78 to 61 (26th February 1795).

In the following year matters at first seemed more hopeful. Twice did Pitt and Wilberforce beat the supporters of the trade by fair majorities; but on the third reading of the Abolition Bill it was lost by four votes. Wilberforce noted indignantly that enough of its supporters were at the Opera to have turned the scale. The same apathy characterized the session of 1797, when the mutinies in the fleet and the sharp financial crisis told heavily against a measure certain to entail some losses in shipping and colonial circles.. At this time Pitt seems to have lost heart in the matter. This appeared in his attitude towards a plausible but insidious proposal, that the Governors of Colonies should be directed to recommend the local Assemblies to adopt measures which would improve the lot of the negroes and thus prepare the way for the abolition of the Slave Trade. Than this nothing could be more futile; for the Governors and Assemblies were known to desire the continuance of the trade. Yet Pitt urged Wilberforce to accept the motion if it were modified; but, on Wilberforce refusing, he "stood stiffly by him." They were beaten by a majority of thirty-six—a proof that the House wished to postpone abolition to the distant future.[1]

The negotiations for peace with France, which went on at Lille during the summer of that year, offered an opportunity for including a mutual guarantee of the two Powers that they would abolish the Slave Trade. Pitt seems to have disapproved of introducing this question into the discussions, either from a fear of complicating them, or from a belief that it would be treated better after the conclusion of peace.[1] His reluctance was misconstrued by Wilberforce, who sent him the following letter:

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," ii, 196; Clarkson, *op. cit.*, ii, 475.

> Hull, August 1, 1797.[2]
>
> . . . I am afraid the negotiation is not in such a state as to render the idea I started of negotiating unconditionally for the abolition of the Slave Trade a practical question very necessary to be just now discussed. But if the negotiation should wear a more promising aspect, let me beg you seriously to weigh the matter. Dundas is friendly to the notion, as indeed I must do him, and myself too, the justice to say that I believe he would. Grenville ought to be so, and all the rest except Lord Liverpool are either neutral or friendly. I must honestly say, I never was so much hurt since I knew you as at your not receiving and encouraging this proposal, which even Lord Liverpool himself ought to have approved on the ground on which he used to oppose.[3] Do, my dear Pitt, I entreat you reconsider the matter. I am persuaded of your zeal in this cause, when, amidst the multitude of matters which force themselves on you more pressingly, it can obtain a hearing; but I regret that you have so been drawn off from it. Indeed regret is a very poor term to express what I feel on this subject. Excuse this, from the fulness of my heart, which I have often kept down with difficulty and grief.
>
> My dear Pitt let me intreat you, as I see another bishop is dead, to consider well whom you appoint. I am persuaded that if the clergy could be brought to know and to do their duty, both the religious and civil state of this country would receive a principle of life.

The rupture of the Lille negotiation by the French falsified these hopes and served to justify Pitt for not weighting it with a contentious proposal. But for the present at least, he had lost hope in the cause. It is true that he always spoke strongly on its behalf during the ensuing efforts put forth by Wilberforce.[4] But the buoyancy of his belief was gone, and some even of his friends accused him of apathy.[5] This is probably unjust. A man may believe firmly in a measure, and yet be convinced that it cannot pass under present conditions. In that case he will do his best, but his efforts will be those of an overburdened horse unable to master the load.

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[1] See "Life of Wilberforce" (ii, 224) for an accusation against Pitt and the Government in this matter.

[2] Pitt MSS., 189.

[3] Lord Liverpool (as Mr. Jenkinson) had opposed on the ground that France, etc., would take up the trade if we let it fall.

[4] Clarkson, *op. cit.*, ii, 485.

[5] Letter of James Stephen (June 1797) in "Life of Wilberforce," ii, 225.

More than once he annoyed Wilberforce by preventing a useless discussion of the question.[1] Insinuations of insincerity were therefore hurled at Pitt. Indeed they seem to have gained wide credence. We find his young admirer, Canning, writing at Brooksby, near Leicester, on 15th December 1799, that very many friends doubted whether he now desired to carry abolition, while some even commended his prudence in doing less than he professed in the matter. Canning found it far from easy to eradicate this notion from the minds of his hosts, the Ellises, by informing them of the object of a secret mission to the West Indies then undertaken by Smith.[2]

It may be well to postpone to the second volume the question of Pitt's attitude towards abolition in his second Ministry, that of 1804-6. But we may notice here certain criticisms which apply mainly, of course, to the years 1788-1800. He has been censured for not making abolition a Cabinet question.[3] But how could he do so when the majority of Ministers opposed it? For a short time only the Duke of Richmond and he favoured abolition. The substitution of Grenville for Sydney strengthened his hands; but even then he was in a minority in the Cabinet on this question. Further, the House of Lords consistently, and by increasing majorities, scouted the measure; and the House of Commons, even under the spell of Pitt's eloquence, refused to decree immediate abolition, and that, too, before the shadow of the great war shrouded the whole subject in disastrous eclipse. After the last year of peace of Pitt's ministerial career, other considerations came uppermost. The need of keeping up the mercantile marine, both as a source of wealth and as a nursery for the royal navy, cooled the zeal of many friends of the movement. Windham opposed it in a manner that earned him the title of Macchiavelli. Others also fell away; and even the eloquence of young Canning on its behalf did not make up for defections. The better class of West India planters and merchants tacitly agreed to the limitation of the Slave Trade; and with this prospect in view many friends of the cause relaxed their efforts.

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[1] As in June 1798. See "Life of Wilberforce," ii, 286.

[2] For this letter see "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies."

[3] Lecky, v, 64-6; J. L. le B. Hammond, "Fox," 60.

Further, when the King, a decided majority both in the Cabinet and in the House of Lords, and a wavering majority in the Commons, were unchangeably opposed to immediate abolition, what could a Minister do? The ordinary course of conduct, resignation, would have availed nothing. As nearly all the Ministerial bench disliked the proposal, no coherent Cabinet could have been formed. True, a Ministry composed of Pitt, Grenville, Fox, Burke, Sheridan, and Wilberforce might perhaps have forced the measure through the Commons (to see it fail in the Lords); but so monstrous a coalition could scarcely have seen the light; certainly it could not have lived amid the storms of the war. Besides, the first duty of a Minister after 1792 was to secure for his country the boon of a solid peace. As we shall see, that was ever Pitt's aim; and grief at seeing it constantly elude his grasp finally cost him his life. Further, the assumption that he could have coerced the members of his Cabinet because they differed from him on this question is untenable. He was able to secure the retirement of Sydney because he was not highly efficient, and of Thurlow on the ground of contumacy. But to compel useful and almost necessary Ministers like Dundas or Camden to retire, when the majority in both Houses agreed with them, would have set at defiance all the traditions of parliamentary life.

The criticisms noticed above are based on the assumption that Pitt was all-powerful and could bend the Cabinet and Parliament to his will. This is an exaggeration. Where, as in the case of pocket boroughs and the Slave Trade, members felt their interests at stake, they somnolently resisted the charms of his oratory and trooped into the opposite lobby. The British people is slow to realize its responsibilities, but in the end it responds to them; and in these years of defeat at Westminster the efforts of Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and others spread abroad convictions which were to assure an ultimate triumph.

The failure of Pitt to carry the abolition of the Slave Trade or materially to improve the condition of the negroes was to have a sinister influence on our position in the West Indies. While the slave owners and shippers and their friends at Westminster refused to budge an inch, the French Jacobins eagerly rushed forward and proclaimed the equality of all mankind. Therefore early in the course of the Great War the slaves rallied to the tricolour; and Toussaint l'Ouverture, the ablest of negro leaders, enthusiastically marshalled their levies in Hayti for the overthrow of British rule. In a later chapter we shall trace the disastrous sequel. Colonel (afterwards Sir John) Moore noted in his Diary that the negroes were for the most part fanatical for liberty; and, after committing deeds of desperation in its name, died defiantly with the cry *Vive la République* on their lips.[1] Here we touch on one of the chief causes for the frightful waste of British troops in the West Indies. With discontent rife in our own colonies, the struggle against the blacks, especially in Hayti, placed on our men a strain unendurable in that pestilential climate. The Hon. J. W. Fortescue, the historian of the British Army, estimates its total losses in the West Indies during the war of 1793-1802 as not far short of 100,000 men. Whatever the total may be, it is certain that at least half of that woeful sacrifice resulted from the crass stupidity and brutal selfishness displayed by mercantile and colonial circles on this question.

In the last four chapters we have taken a survey of questions of great interest in British and colonial history, and have therefore interrupted the story of Pitt's dealings with continental affairs. It is time now to recur to events of world-wide import, namely, the ambitious schemes of the Sovereigns of the East and the great popular upheaval in France.

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[1] "Diary of Sir John Moore," i, 234.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SCHEMES OF CATHARINE II

I came to Russia poor; but I will not die in debt to the Empire; for I shall leave her the Crimea and Poland as my portion.—CATHARINE II.

IN the spring of the year 1787 the ablest potentate in Europe set out on a State progress to the newly annexed provinces in the South of her Empire. It was carried out with an energy and splendour which illustrated the union of the forethought of the West with the barbaric splendour of the East. A great flotilla of galleys bore the Sovereign, her chief courtiers, the ambassadors of Great Britain, Austria, and France, and numerous attendants down the course of the Dnieper to the city of Kherson near its mouth. By day the banks were fringed with throngs of the peasants of Little Russia, brought up to order, while ever and anon the shouts of Cossacks, Calmucks, and Circassians impressed the beholders with a sense of the boundless resources of that realm. By night the welkin flared with illuminations; and the extent of the resting-places, which had arisen like exhalations at the bidding of her favourite, Prince Potemkin, promised the speedy inroad of civilization into the lands over which the Turk still held sway. In truth, far more impressive to the mind's eye was the imperious will of which these marvels were the manifestation, the will of Catharine II.[1]

At her invitation there joined her near Potemkin's creation, the city of Ekaterinoslav, another monarch of romantic and adventurous character. Joseph II of Austria, head of the Holy

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[1] It has been said that the journey was undertaken partly with the view of seeing whether Potemkin had honestly used the money given him for the warlike preparations in the South; and that he hastily did his utmost to impress the Czarina favourably. This last is of course highly probable; but, as we shall see presently, the journey had been projected in 1785. Moreover, Potemkin, while improvising crowds of peasants, could not improvise the warships launched at Kherson.

Roman Empire, now reluctantly turned towards the eastern conquests to which she had long beckoned him. Together they proceeded on the progress southwards to Kherson, which they entered under a triumphal arch bearing the inscription in Greek, "The way to Byzantium." A still more impressive proof of the activity of her masterful favourite awaited them. Potemkin had pushed on the work of the new dockyard at Kherson; and as a result they witnessed the launch of three warships. The largest, of 80 guns, was christened by Catharine herself, "Joseph II."[1]

Thence the imperial procession wended its way to the much-prized acquisition, the Crimea. In that Tartar Khanate the fertile brain and forceful personality of Potemkin had wrought wonders. It was but four years since the Empress, in her joy at the annexation of that vantage-ground, had pointed on the map to the little township of Akhtiar, re-named it Sevastopol, and ordered the construction of a dockyard and navy. Now, in June 1787, as the allied sovereigns topped the hills which command that port, the Hapsburg ruler uttered a cry of surprise and admiration. For there below lay a squadron of warships, ready, as it seemed, to set sail and plant the cross on the dome of St. Sophia at Constantinople.

Hitherto Joseph II had not shown the amount of zeal befitting an ally and an admirer. True, he had not openly belied the terms of the compact of the year 1781, which had been his sheet-anchor amid the storms of his reign. But that alliance had been the prelude to vast schemes productive at once of longing and distrust. They aimed at nothing less than the partition of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. The glorious days of Prince Eugène were to be recalled, and, on the expulsion of the Tartar horde over the Bosphorus, Austria was to acquire the Turkish lands which that warrior had gained for her by the Peace of Passarowitz (1718), namely, the Banat of Temesvar, the northern half of Servia, and the districts of Wallachia as far as the River Aluta. The only direct gain to Catharine was to be the Tartar territory north of the Black Sea as far as the Dniester. As for Moldavia and Wallachia, they were to form an independent kingdom under a Christian Prince (a plan finally realized in 1858); and the remainder of the Balkan Peninsula was to be ruled by the favourite grandson of the Empress, Prince Constantine.

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[1] "F. O.," Russia, 15. Fitzherbert to Carmarthen, 3rd May 1787. Fitzherbert accompanied the Empress throughout this tour. His letters are of high interest.

Outwardly this partition seemed to offer a fair share to Austria. But it was soon clear that the grasping genius of Muscovy would transform the nominally independent kingdoms of Constantinople and Roumania into feudatories and bar to Austria the way to the Lower Danube, the Aegean, and the Lower Adriatic. Not yet were the lessons of the first partition of Poland forgotten at Vienna.[1] Then, too, the Austro-Russian compact had but slightly advanced the interests of Joseph II in Germany. Catharine had done little to further his pet scheme of the Belgic-Bavarian Exchange; and, apart from feminine fumings, she had not seriously counteracted the formation of the League of German Princes whereby Frederick the Great had thwarted that almost revolutionary proposal (1785). Probably this accounts for the reluctance of Joseph to give rein to the southward impulses of the Czarina in that year. At its close Sir Robert Murray Keith, British Ambassador at Vienna, reported that the Czarina's tour to Kherson was postponed, and four days later he recorded a remarkable conversation in the course of which the Emperor revealed his dislike of the dangerous schemes then mooted for the partition of the Turkish Empire. "I can tell you for certain," he said, "*que si jamais tous les coquins se rompent avec l'Empire Ottoman*, France is firmly determined to strike a bold stroke by making herself mistress of Egypt. This I know with certainty from more quarters than one; and M. Tott himself told me at Paris that he had travelled through all Egypt by order of his Court to explore that country in a military light and to lay down a plan for the conquest of it."[2]

In these words we have probably the reason for the deferring of the Russian schemes against Turkey. They are also noteworthy, as they must have tended to deepen the distrust which Pitt and Carmarthen felt for France. Her chief Minister, Vergennes, figured as the protector of Turkey against Russia, recalling thereby the policy of Louis XV's reign, which in 1739 availed to tear away from Austria the conquests of Prince Eugène and restore them to the Sublime Porte. But under this show of championship there seems to have lain an alternative policy, that of furthering the partition of Turkey, provided that

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[1] See Sorel, "La Question d'Orient," 300 *et seq.*

[2] "F. O.," Austria, 11. Keith to Carmarthen, 3rd and 7th December 1785.

France acquired Egypt, and some other vantage posts in the Levant. As we have already seen, France was busy in Egypt and the Orient with schemes which probably would have startled the world had she rivetted her hold on the Dutch Netherlands in the year 1787.

The accession of the facile and dissolute Frederick William to the Prussian throne in 1786, and the preoccupation of England and France in the Dutch crisis which followed, now left Joseph free to comply with the request of the Czarina that he would join her in the journey to the Crimea. After long hesitations he reluctantly gave his assent. His aged Chancellor, Prince Kaunitz, the champion of the connection with Russia and France, advised him to direct the imperial conferences towards the Bavarian Exchange and the dissolution of the Fürstenbund. Catharine willed otherwise. Under her influence the views of Joseph underwent a notable orientation. He came back to Vienna virtually pledged to a war for the partition of Turkey.

The change in Joseph's policy was a tribute to the potency of the Czarina's will. In her personality, as we have already seen, there were singular powers of fascination and command. Her vivacity and charm, varied by moods of petulance or fury, made up a character feminine in its impulsiveness and of masculine strength. The erstwhile Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst, who by a series of audacious intrigues, and probably by the murder of her consort Peter III, had become the greatest autocrat of the century, still retained the intellectual freshness of youth. Her character and career present a series of bizarre contrasts. The poverty of her upbringing, the dissolute adventures of her early life, and the outrageous crimes of her womanhood would have utterly tainted a personality less remarkable and attractive. But in the loose society of St. Petersburg it had long been customary to gloze over lapses of virtue by easy descriptions, like that which the stately rhetoric of Burke applied to the chivalry of Versailles, that "vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness."

Certainly the intellectual keenness and social witcheries of the sorceress threw a charm over her rout. French and German philosophers praised her learning and wit, but innate shrewdness kept her from more than a passing dalliance with the unsettling theories which were to work havoc in France. Here as in her amours she observed some measure of worldly prudence;

so that no favourite could count on a long reign of pillage. Thus, whether by whim or by design, she kept devotion and hope ever on the stretch; and one might almost apply to her, even at the age of fifty-nine, Shakespeare's description of Cleopatra:

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety; other women cloy
> The appetites they feed; but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies.

Like the "serpent of old Nile," Catharine had many weaknesses; and they might have worked her ruin in the more strenuous age which followed; but fortune brought her to the front at a time when Frederick the Great desired the friendship of Russia, and when Hapsburg policy vacillated between the conservatism of Maria Theresa and the viewiness of her son Joseph. Thus the Czarina could work her will on the decaying Powers, Turkey and Poland, and raised the prestige of her Empire to unimagined heights.

A few shrewd observers were not dazzled by this splendour. Sir James Harris, who went as British envoy to Russia in 1778 to cultivate the friendship, and if possible the alliance, of Catharine, rightly probed the inner weakness of her position. It lay in the suddenness of her rise, the barbarousness of her people, the unblushing peculations of Ministers and officials, and the shiftiness of Muscovite policy. This last defect he traced to the peculiarities of the Empress herself, which he thus summed up: "She has a masculine force of mind, obstinacy in adhering to a plan, and intrepidity in the execution of it; but she wants the more manly virtues of deliberation, forbearance in prosperity, and accuracy of judgment, while she possesses in a high degree the weaknesses vulgarly attributed to her sex—love of flattery and its inseparable companion, vanity; [and] an inattention to unpleasant but salutary advice." Six years later he sharpened his criticism and described her as led by her passions, not by reason and argument; her prejudices, though easily formed, were immovable; her good opinion was liable to constant fluctuations and whims; and her resolves might carry her to any lengths.[1] Such, too, was the opinion of the Comte de Ségur, the French ambassador, who wrote about the Turkish schemes renewed in 1787: "We are so accustomed to see Russia throw herself offhand into the most risky affairs, and Fortune has so persistently helped her, that there is no accounting for the actions of this Power on the rules of a scientific policy."[1]

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," i, 204, 534.

This peculiarity was far from repelling Joseph II. While pluming himself on the application of reason to politics, that crowned philosopher forgot to take counsel of her twin-sister, prudence. On his polyglot Empire, which already felt the first stirrings of the principle of nationality, he imposed centralizing laws, agrarian, social, and religious, which speedily aroused the hostility of those whom he meant to uplift. Along with all this he pushed on schemes which unsettled Germany, Belgium, and Poland; and now, as if all this were not enough, he was drawn into the vortex of the Turkish enterprises of Catharine.

It is a mistake to assume that Joseph had no practical aims in view. He hoped to acquire from Turkey territories which would open up trade on the Adriatic and the Lower Danube, and he counted on strengthening the Russian alliance to which he trusted for the furtherance of his aims in Germany and Belgium. Yet rarely has a monarch formed a resolution more fraught with peril. In truth it resulted from the mastery gained by an abler and more determined nature over one that was generous but ill-compacted, daring but unsteady. Had the Emperor surveyed the situation with care, he must have seen that it favoured Catharine rather than himself. She was beset by no troubles at home; while his lands, especially the *Pays Bas*, heaved with disloyal excitement. She had appeased the Turcophile feelings of France by granting a favourable commercial treaty; and Montmorin, the successor of Vergennes, was weaker in himself and less able to support the Sultan. In short, Catharine had her hands free, while Joseph had them full.[2]

The alliance between Russia and Poland at this time acquired new vitality. During her triumphal tour Catharine received the homage of her former lover, Stanislaus, King of Poland, and received from him the promise of the help of 100,000 Polish troops for the Turkish war, and "likewise for any other contest" —a phrase aimed against Prussia, if she dared to intervene. The value of the promise soon became open to doubt. The monarch in Poland had long been a figure-head, while the real power lay with the powerful and ambitious nobility, which, under the lead of the Czartoryski and Potocki families, ever chafed at Muscovite ascendancy, and now declined to help Catharine in humbling their natural ally, the Sultan. In 1790 their views were to prevail; but, for the present, the resources of Poland seemed at her beck and call.

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[1] Wazilewski, "Le Roman d'une Impératrice," 418.

[2] Keith reported on 30th August 1787 ("F. O.," Austria, 14) that the Emperor "saw this storm coming with deep regret," and that the ferment in his Belgian lands would prevent his taking action against Turkey.

The prospects of Catharine therefore were brilliant in the extreme. But for once Fortune played her false. After the departure of the Emperor from the Crimea, and while she still fondly surveyed the warlike preparations at its new dockyard, there came news of the alarming prospects for the harvest in Russia. "The Empress," wrote Fitzherbert on 24th July, "almost immediately after leaving the Crimea fell under a great and visible depression of spirits, accompanied at times with violent gusts of ill humour; and in this state remained with very little intermission till our arrival here [Czarko-zelo]." He ascribed these moody humours to the failure of the corn crop, which necessitated the immediate purchase of 5,000,000 roubles' worth of foreign grain, and the distribution of Potemkin's army in widespread cantonments.

To wage a great campaign while bread stood at famine prices was impossible. In this predicament the Empress decided to hide her retirement by a parade of diplomatic bluster. She despatched to Constantinople a special envoy, Bulgakoff, to lay claim to the Principality of Georgia, and to submit this and other matters in dispute to the mediation of France and Austria. The move was dexterous; but in such a case the success of a game of bluff depends on the adversary not perceiving the weakness of which it is the screen. Now, the Sublime Porte, though usually inert, divined the secret, and resolved to withstand these endless affronts. During thirteen years orthodox Moslems had writhed under the humiliations of the Treaty of Kainardji (1774), which acknowledged the complete independence of the Tartar Khans of the Crimea and the Kuban valley, and in vague terms admitted the Czarina to be the protectress of the Christian subjects of the Porte. In 1783, thanks to Austrian support, Catharine seized the Crimea; and now she laid claim to Georgia. The cup of humiliation was full; and the pride of Moslems scorned to drink it.

The despatches of Sir Robert Ainslie, British ambassador at

Constantinople, show clearly enough the motives that prompted that Government to strike an unexpected blow. On 25th June 1787 he reported to Carmarthen that the Porte looked on the journey of the Czarina and her warlike preparations as designed to wear out the patience and the resources of the Turks, who aleady were said to have 240,000 men ready near the Danube, and others in Asia. If, he added, she did not explain her present conduct, "I am afraid they will commence hostilities," and "strike a home blow in the Crimea." On 10th July he stated that there could be no solid peace so long as Russia held the Crimea in defiance of the Treaty of Kainardji. "The honour of the Sultan, the security of this Empire, the interest of the Mahometan religion, and those [*sic*] of justice all require that . . . the independence of the Crimea should be re-established. It is true, the Porte agreed to the cession; but that act, torn from her weakness, was involuntary and unjust. In short, it can only be binding until a good opportunity offers to cancel its effect. This, my Lord, seems the opinion of the Cabinet and the motive of their extensive preparations, but they are diffident of success and afraid to attack unless Russia herself furnishes a pretext." He adds that the Turkish Ministers believed Bulgakoff's mission to be designed to "spin out the summer"; but that the Turkish levies could scarcely be kept together.[1]

As for the temporizing offers of mediation from France and Austria, the Porte would have none of them, and refused to accept any in which Great Britain had no share. The Grand Vizier cherished the hope that Austria and Russia were not really united by treaty, and seemed to desire, rather than to avoid, a rupture. On 30th July the Reis Effendi asked our ambassador what England would do in case of a Russo-Turkish War. Ainslie replied that she would "keep strict neutrality," and strongly urged the need of peace. "Never will we purchase peace on the dishonourable terms held out by Russia," replied the Turkish Minister, and he added with oriental subtlety that, unless she gave way, war must come "before many months are elapsed." Ainslie thought that this portended war in the spring of 1788.[2]

But on 16th August the Sultan struck swiftly and hard. Doubtless he had heard news of the famine in Russia and the dispersion of Potemkin's forces. It was clear that for a time the would-be aggressor was reduced to the defensive. Was it not well, then, to deliver the blow rather than wait for it to fall in the next year, and perhaps from both Austria and Russia? True, the Turks were not ready—they never were so. But their recent successes over the Mameluke Beys in Egypt and the rebellious Mahmoud Pacha in Albania emboldened them to take a step which completely surprised all the Cabinets of Europe. On 16th August, after a long conference with the Grand Vizier, Bulgakoff and five members of his suite were apprehended and marched off to the Seven Towers, there to be kept in close custody. This was the Turkish way of declaring war to the knife. The Porte defended it on the ground of outrages to its flag at Kinburn and Sevastopol;[1] but the incident added rancour to the hatred of Catharine, and she swore to glut her revenge upon the insolent infidels. Her rage was all the greater because for once she was outwitted. Fitzherbert, on hearing of the novel declaration of war by the Turks, stated to Carmarthen[2] that it must have upset all her calculations, for he knew that the blustering language used by Bulgakoff "was in fact intended to produce the contrary effect."[3]

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[1] "F. O.," Turkey, 8.

[2] *Ibid.* Ainslie to Carmarthen, 9th August 1787.

These events were destined potently to influence the career of Pitt. In one respect they affect his reputation; for Catharine in her fury accused him of inciting the Turks to attack her.[4] The charge was not unnatural. She had long shown her spleen against England in bitter words and hostile deeds. More than once she thrust aside Pitt's overtures for an alliance; and she rejected his proposals for a commercial treaty while she granted that boon to France (January 1787). Further, the outbreak of war in the East came very opportunely for Great Britain and Prussia at the crisis of the Dutch embroglio and enabled the Court of Berlin confidently to launch its troops against the

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[1] "F. O.," Turkey, 8. Ainslie to Carmarthen, 17th August 1787.

[2] "F. O.," Russia, 15. Despatch of 22nd September. Fitzherbert was then coming home ill. His place was filled by Fraser.

[3] In view of these facts I cannot agree with the statement of Prof. Lodge ("Camb. Mod. Hist.," viii, 316) that the action of the Turks "was dictated by passion rather than by policy." It seems to me a skilful move, especially as they already had reason to hope for help from Prussia and Sweden. Häusser (i, 225) wrongly terms it a "desperate resolve."

[4] "F. O.," Russia, 15. Fraser to Carmarthen, 5th October 1787.

Patriots in Holland. The tilt given from Constantinople to the delicately poised kaleidoscope of diplomacy had startling results. The mobile Powers—Russia, Austria, and France—were fixed fast, while the hitherto stationary States, Prussia and England, were set free for swift action.

Nevertheless it is untrue that the tilt came from Pitt and Carmarthen. They still clung to the traditional British policy of befriending Russia, which Fox had enthusiastically supported. Our Government instructed Fraser at St. Petersburg to express regret at the outbreak of war and to offer, conjointly with Prussia, our good services for the restoration of peace. Pitt also informed Vorontzoff, Russian ambassador in London, of his desire for a good understanding with Russia, and stated that he would not oppose acquisitions of Turkish territory. All the evidence tends to prove that he strove to prevent hostilities, which must upset the existing order in the East and probably end in a general war. As the concern of Prussia was equally great (it being certain by the end of 1787 that Austria would join in the war) the two Protestant Powers drew together for joint action though not, as yet, for actual alliance.[1]

In fact, we find here the reason of the coyness of Pitt in framing that compact. He still preferred to have Russia, rather than Prussia, as an ally. But his advances to Catharine ended with the impossible retort that he must recall Ainslie from Constantinople. Nevertheless it was not till the middle of March 1788 that Pitt took a step displeasing to her by forbidding her agents to hire Russian transports in England.[2] The Empress showed her annoyance at these stricts notions of neutrality by publicly receiving the famous American privateer, Paul Jones.[3]

Pitt's attitude towards Austria was at first equally friendly. On 14th September 1787 Carmarthen sent to Vienna assurances that the Russo-Turkish War would make no difference to the friendship of George III for Austria, and that we should maintain "the determined system of this country to contribute as far as possible to the continuance of the public tranquillity, or to its speedy restoration if unhappily it should be interrupted." By these and other proposals Pitt and Carmarthen vainly sought to detach Austria from Russia, and also to conjure away the spectre of a Triple Alliance between France, Russia, and Austria, which long haunted the courts of Whitehall. Early in 1788, that ghost was laid by the Austrian attack upon the Turks, which France had striven to avert, and Pitt felt free to accept the proffered alliance of Prussia which, as we saw in Chapter XVI, finally came about in August 1788.[1]

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[1] See Ewart's Memorandum to Pitt in "Dropmore P.," ii, 44-9 for an admirable survey of events; also Wittichen, 130-5, and Häusser, i, 223-5.

The surprise of Prussian statesmen at the outbreak of war seems quite sincere; and evidence is strongly against the statement of Sorel ("L'Europe et la Rév. franç.," i, p. 524) that Hertzberg egged on the Turks, and later on Sweden, to war.

[2] "F. O.," Russia, 15. Carmarthen to Fraser, 18th March 1788.

[3] *Ibid.* Fraser to Carmarthen, 9th May.

The campaign of that year is devoid of interest. Scarcity of bread on the Russian side and the usual unpreparedness of the Turks clogged the operations, which led to a sharp conflict only at one point. The fortress of Kinburn, recently acquired by the Russians, commanded the estuary formed by the converging Rivers Dnieper and Bug. It stood opposite the Turkish fortress, Oczakoff, which was deemed the chief bulwark of the Ottomans in the East. Early in October 1788 they made an attempt to seize Kinburn as a prelude to the hoped-for conquest of the Crimea. But in that fortress was a wizened little veteran, who ate bread with the soldiers, startled them at dawn by his cock crows, and summarized his ideas on tactics by the inspiriting words: "At them with the cold steel." The personality of Suvóroff was worth an army corps, for it was bound up with triumph. He now waited within the walls of Kinburn until the Turkish fleet landed 5,000 choice Janissaries below the town. Then by a furious sally, flanked by a charge of ten squadrons of horse on the wings, he broke up that fanatical band and drove it into the sea. Only 700 Turks survived. The affair was not of the first importance, but it heartened the Russians for the greater enterprises of the next year.

Meanwhile Catharine, fuming at the sorry beginning of her war of conquest, upbraided her ally with his tardiness in coming to her help. But Joseph was in a difficult situation. The ferment in the Netherlands and Hungary was increasing. The close union of England and Prussia in Dutch affairs caused him much concern; and, as we have seen in Chapter XIV, the French

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 14. On 23rd September Ewart reported that Spain had "positively declined the pressing overtures of France to enter into a Quadruple Alliance with her and the two Imperial Courts" ("F. O.," Prussia, 14).

Ministry was fain to huddle up the disputes in Holland, partly in order to be free to support the Sultan. Montmorin resolved to thwart the partition of the Turkish Empire and brought pressure to bear upon Kaunitz, who ever looked askance on oriental adventures.[1] Nevertheless, by the month of November Joseph had decided on war. The Austrians made a discreditable attempt to surprise Belgrade; and in February 1788 war was declared.

The ensuing campaign was fertile in surprises. As often happens, the Allies waited for one another to start the campaign, and thus lost the early part of the summer. The Russians, owing to the armament of the Swedes and the incapacity of Potemkin, did far less than was expected; and the brunt of the Ottoman onset finally fell upon the Austrians. Joseph was compelled to fall back towards Temesvar on the night of 20th September; and a panic seized the Imperialists. That motley host, mistaking the shouts of its diverse races for the war cry of the Turks, fired wildly upon the supposed pursuers; and the Ottomans, hearing the babel din, finally pressed on the rout and captured 4,000 men and a large part of the artillery and stores. Pestilence completed the work begun by the Moslems; and thus it came about that the efforts of 200,000 Austrians effected nothing more than the surrender of Chotzim and three other frontier strongholds of the second rank. The disgrace dimmed the lustre of their arms, undermined the health of the Emperor, and gave new heart to Hertzberg and the numerous enemies of the Hapsburg realm.

The chief cause of this ignominious failure is ultimately traceable to an influence that had long been at work far away, namely, the restless ambition of Gustavus III of Sweden. In the summer of the year 1788 that monarch suddenly drew the sword against Catharine, and from the vantage ground of his Finnish province marched towards St. Petersburg. This threatening move compelled the Empress to recall part of her forces, condemned the rest of them to the defensive, and thus exposed the Austrians to the spirited attack above described.

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 14. Keith to Carmarthen, 6th October 1787. On 10th October he reported that France would acquiesce in Joseph's eastern policy if he would help her against England and Prussia in the Dutch dispute. On 24th October he stated that Austria refused to do so. On 14th November Joseph II informed him privately that he must make war on Turkey.

Seeing that Pitt was held to be ultimately responsible for these events, we must pause here to sketch the character and career of Gustavus III. Of the three monarchs dealt with in this chapter he is not the least interesting. Rivalling Catharine in intellectual keenness and moody waywardness, he excelled her in generosity, virtue, and chivalry. There is in him the strain of romance which refines the schemes, and adds pathos to the failures, of Joseph II; but the Swede excelled the Hapsburg alike in grit, fighting power, charm, and versatility. He was a bundle of startling opposites. Slight of figure, naturally delicate and pensive, he threw himself eagerly into feats of daring and hardihood. By turns poet and humourist, playwright and warrior, devout but an incorrigible intriguer, he lured, enthralled, browbeat, or outwitted the Swedish people as no one had done since the days of Charles XII. In truth he seemed a re-incarnation of that ill-starred ruler, especially in his power of calling forth the utmost from his people, and leading them on to feats beyond their strength. From the midsummer day of 1771 on which the young King opened his Estates with a speech from the throne, it was clear that his iron will and captivating address might regain for the Crown the power torn from it some years before by the Caps, the faction of the opposing nobles and burghers. Fourteen months later Gustavus struck his blow. Despite the Russian gold poured in for the support of the Caps, the King gained the people and the army to his side, locked the recalcitrant Senate in their Chamber, overthrew the usurped authority of the Riksdag, and thenceforth governed in the interests of his people. It was characteristic of him that he prefaced his *coup d'état* by the first performance of a Swedish opera, the libretto of which he had himself revised.[1]

Thenceforth "the royal charmer" governed at will, and Sweden regained much of her old prestige. The traditional alliance with France was renewed; and for a time the jealous Catharine seemed to acquiesce in the new order of things at Stockholm. In reality she never ceased to intrigue there, as also at Warsaw, seeking to recall the days of schism and weakness. The extravagance of Gustavus played into her hands. Little by little the factions regained lost ground; the Riksdag of 1786 threw out all but one of the royal measures; and the King was fain to govern more absolutely.

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[1] Nisbet Bain, "Gustavus III and his Contemporaries," ch. ix.

The Russo-Turkish War now gave him the chance for which his restless spirit longed, namely, to attempt to recover part at least of the trans-Baltic lands ceded to Russia, and to dissolve a secret Russo-Danish alliance which aimed at the overthrow of the present *régime* in Sweden. He therefore allied himself with the Sultan on condition of receiving a yearly subsidy of 1,000,000 piastres. He further sounded the Courts of Berlin, Warsaw, and Paris, but received no encouragement. At London, as we have seen, his overtures at Christmas 1787 were set aside. They were renewed in the spring of 1788, and received more attention, it being then the aim of Pitt to bring some of the secondary States into the projected Triple Alliance. But the ardent spirit of Gustavus far outleaped the mark. His demands for money were suspiciously large. "Sweden," so Carmarthen wrote to Harris on 20th June 1788, "has a most voracious appetite for subsidies, but from the enormous extravagance of her demand has put it out of our power to proceed further at present on that head."[1]

This was fortunate; for Gustavus was then preparing to throw down the gauntlet to Russia. Early in July he set sail for Helsingfors, and launched at Catharine a furious ultimatum, bidding her cede Carelia and Livonia to the Swedes, and restore the Crimea to the Sultan. On the receipt of that astonishing missive the imperial virago raged, wept, and swore by turns. The crisis was indeed serious. In and near St. Petersburg were only 6,000 troops.

Nevertheless she acted with her wonted vigour. She called up the Militia; and her fleet, commanded by Admiral Greig and officered largely by Britons, prepared to dispute with Gustavus the mastery of the Gulf of Finland.[2] In this it succeeded. It dealt the smaller naval force of the Swedes a severe check, and soon cooped it up in Sveaborg. Meanwhile the advance of the Swedes from their Finnish province on the Russian capital was stopped by a mutiny of the officers, which soon spread to the rank and file. The causes of this event are still obscure. The admirers of Gustavus ascribed it to the factiousness of nobles and the bribes of Catharine. The Swedish Opposition, and also Charles Keene, British envoy at Stockholm, explained it as the natural outcome of the extravagance and ambition of the monarch who, not content with violating the constitution and ruining the finances of his realm, wantonly plunged it into a struggle for which he had not prepared. Consequently, when his ill-clad and ill-fed militia found that the Russian raids into Finland were a myth, and that the only enemies were royal ambition and famine, they at once thwarted the former by constituting the army as a "confederation," and declaring their resolve for peace. If there must be war with Russia, let it be declared legally by a freely elected Diet at Stockholm.[1] The Swedish crews at Sveaborg, where food and warlike munitions were alike wanting, partly joined in the movement; and the universality of the discontent, which compelled Gustavus to return helplessly to Stockholm, is perhaps sufficient proof that influences were at work more widespread than party spirit and more potent than foreign gold.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 28063.

[2] Greig and the other Britons had long been in the Russian service. I cannot find that they were recalled.

However the fact may be explained, it is certain that the Swedes, when almost within striking distance of the Russian capital, halted, sent offers of an armistice, and then retreated into Finland. Catharine was saved; but after the capture of Oczakoff from the Turks she vented her spleen in one of her icily brilliant *mots*: "As Mr. Pitt wishes to chase me from St. Petersburg, I hope he will allow me to take refuge at Constantinople."

It was natural for the Empress to suspect England and Prussia of complicity in the Swedish enterprise; for she herself in a similar case would have egged on Gustavus. But the evidence in the British archives proves that neither George III nor Frederick William, Pitt nor Hertzberg, had a hand in the matter. George III and Pitt loved peace because it was economical. Through the spring and summer they were trying to effect a pacification. On 16th May 1788 the Foreign Office sent off a despatch to Ainslie urging him to co-operate with Dietz, the Prussian Minister at the Porte, in order, if possible, to pave the way for a joint mediation of England and Prussia with a view to a pacification in the East; but he was to beware of entering into other plans that the Court of Berlin might have in view, a hint against the ambitious scheme of exchanges now forming in Hertzberg's brain. On Swedish affairs the despatch continued thus: "The Swedish armament causes much speculation both in Russia and elsewhere: the avowed purpose is the necessity of having a respectable force in that Kingdom while Russia is fitting out so formidable a fleet."[1] From this and other signs it is clear that Pitt and Carmarthen, far from expecting war in the Baltic, were intent on plans for stopping it on the Danube and Black Sea.

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[1] "F. O.," Sweden, 7. Keene on 26th August 1788 reported to Carmarthen the facts so far as he knew them, and also in a later "Account." His bias against the King is obvious, and leads me to discount his assertions, *e.g.*, that of 9th September, that the war with Russia was at an end, owing to the offer of peace to Catharine by the Swedish officers, and had become merely "a domestic quarrel between the King and nation." Doubtless it was for this and similar statements that Keene was recalled in December 1788, Liston taking his place.

As for Frederick William, he did not desire war in the North, because it must curtail his pleasures; and Hertzberg, because peace would leave him free to weave his plans more systematically. Ewart, our active and zealous envoy at Berlin, who knew Hertzberg thoroughly, informed Carmarthen on 19th June that Prussia was very cautious as to forming any connection with Sweden.[2] Nine days later he reported that Gustavus had made an alliance with Turkey, but probably would not attack Catharine unless she sent a fleet from Cronstadt round to the Mediterranean. On 25th July, after referring to the Swedish declaration of war against Russia, he added that the Court of Stockholm hoped for the support of Prussia only so far as to keep Denmark quiet. As for himself, he had rebuked the Swedish envoy.[3]

In truth the action of Gustavus annoyed both England and Prussia. They expressed to him their disapproval of his conduct in strong terms. On 29th August Carmarthen wrote to Ewart censuring the action of Gustavus, but adding that the Allies must intervene to stop the war in the Baltic.[4] Pitt also, on hearing of the Danish armament, resolved to save Gustavus from utter ruin. On 1st September he wrote as follows to Grenville (not, be it noted, to Carmarthen): "We had before written to Berlin with power to Ewart to send an offer of our joint mediation if the King of Prussia agreed, and this seems now the more necessary. Our intervention may prevent his

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[1] "F. O.," Turkey, 9. So, too, Lecky, v, 231.

[2] See, too, Frederick William's words on this topic in Dembinski, "Documents relatifs à l'histoire . . . de la Pologne (1788-91)," i, 21.

[3] "F. O.," Prussia, 13. See, too, "Dropmore P.," ii, 47.

[4] "F. O.," Prussia, 14.

[Gustavus] becoming totally insignificant, or dependent upon Russia, and it seems to me an essential point."[1] Eight days later Carmarthen assured the Prussian Court of his satisfaction that it would join in the proposed mediation.[2]

The crisis was indeed most urgent. Catharine was thinking far less of flitting to Constantinople than of ousting Gustavus from Stockholm. Her treaty with Denmark contained secret clauses which bound that Court to alliance with her in case of a Russo-Swedish war; and the young Prince Royal of Denmark, though by marriage a nephew to Gustavus, was only too eager for a campaign which promised to lead to the partition of the Swedish kingdom. The excellent navy of the Danes, and their possession of Norway, gave them great facilities for the invasion of the open country near the important city of Gothenburg; and that once taken, they could easily master the South, and leave the factions at Stockholm to complete their work.

Fortunately there was at Copenhagen one of the ablest of British envoys. Hugh Elliot, brother of Sir Gilbert Elliot, was a man of spirit and resource. His demeanour and habits of mind were as much those of a soldier as of a diplomatist; and nature had endowed him with the stately air and melodramatic arts which avail much at a crisis.[3] For some time past he had suspected the ambitious views of the Prince Royal of Denmark, who despite his minority, ruled the land through the all-powerful Minister, Count Bernstorff. Their conduct was now sinister. Ostensibly they regretted that their treaty with Russia compelled them to attack Sweden, and welcomed Elliot's suggestion of British mediation as a means of preventing such a calamity.[4] Possibly this was Bernstorff's real conviction; for Elliot found out later that the Russian party had sworn to ruin him unless he favoured a warlike policy.

Certain it is that Bernstorff had instructed Schönborn, the Danish envoy in London, to use honeyed words to Carmarthen, which virtually invited England's friendly mediation. In reply Carmarthen "told him that the King lamented extremely the rupture which had taken place between Russia and Sweden, and assured him of His Majesty's earnest desire to contribute as far as possible to the restoration of the tranquillity of the North."

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 353.

[2] "F. O.," Prussia," 14.

[3] "Memoir of Hugh Elliot" by the Countess of Minto.

[4] "F. O.," Denmark, 10. Elliot to Carmarthen, 2nd, 6th August 1788.

Carmarthen sent off a special messenger to Elliot to enable him to propose immediately the mediation of England, Prussia, and Holland between Denmark and Sweden.[1] Bernstorff received this offer on 25th August in the friendliest manner, and promised to check the warlike ardour of the Prince Royal. Four days later Elliot had an interview with the Prince in the hope of refuting the persistent rumours that England had incited both the Sultan and the King of Sweden to attack Russia. The Prince accepted his denials, but assured him that the Danes must fulfil their treaty obligations to Russia.

This serious news led Pitt once again directly to intervene in diplomatic affairs, and to draft the despatch of 9th September to Elliot. He there stated that the instructions already sent off to him, and to Ewart at Berlin, manifested the earnest desire of the British Government for the ending of hostilities in the Baltic, "which might be injurious to the balance of power in that part of the world." He deplored the aggressive intentions of the Danish Court, as being alike opposed to its real interests and certain "to extend the mischiefs of the present war in a manner which cannot fail to excite the most serious attention, and to have a great effect on the conduct, of all those Courts who are interested in the relative situation of the different Powers of the Baltic."[2]

Pitt, then, deeply regretted the outbreak of war in the North, but none the less resolved to prevent the threatened dismemberment of Sweden. The Prussian Court held even stronger views on the subject, and expressed its indignation at the Danish inroad into Sweden "after the repeated assurances given by the Danish Minister of pacific and moderate dispositions."[3] So keen was the annoyance at Berlin that Frederick William resolved to draw up a Declaration that, if Denmark attacked Gustavus, 16,000 Prussians would forthwith invade the Danish Duchy of Holstein. Ewart at once informed Elliot of the entire concurrence of Prussia with England, and thus enabled him to play a daring game. On the evening of 17th September, acting on the advice of Ewart, he resolved to take boat for the Swedish shore, and proceed to the headquarters of Gustavus. The news which finally prompted this decision was that the Swedish monarch had decided to accept the proffered mediation not of the Allies, but of France.[1] Elliot hoped to reverse this decision and to secure the triumph of British and Prussian influence at the Swedish Court. He had not, it appears, received Pitt's despatch cited above, or even the special Instructions sent a little earlier; but he knew enough to warrant his speaking in lofty tones, which were destined to dash the hopes of Catharine and the Prince Royal of Denmark.

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[1] "F. O.," Denmark, 10. Carmarthen to Elliot, 15th August.

[2] *Ibid.* This draft, in Pitt's handwriting, was copied and sent off without alteration.

[3] "F. O.," Prussia, 14. Ewart to Carmarthen, 16th September 1788.

We left Gustavus at Stockholm. There he did his best to quell the discontent of the burghers; but it is probable that a Revolution would have broken out but for the threat of a Danish invasion and the impending loss of Gothenburg. The national danger tended to still the strife of parties; and the King, commending his queen and children to his people, rode away to Dalecarlia in order to arouse the loyal miners and peasants of that region against the invaders. Though he harangued them on the spot where Gustavus Vasa made his memorable appeals, their response was doubtful; but, having raised a small band, he proceeded towards the threatened city.[2]

On his way he met the British envoy at the town of Carlstadt. For eleven days Elliot had searched for the King, and now found him without troops, without attendants, and with a small following of ill-armed peasants (29th September, 1788). Bitterly the monarch exclaimed that, like James II, he must leave his kingdom, a victim to the ambition of Russia, the treachery of Denmark, the factious treason of his nobles, and his own mistakes. Thereupon Elliot replied: "Sire, give me your Crown; I will return it to you with added lustre." He then told him of the offer of mediation by England and Prussia on his behalf. At first, mindful of his engagements to France, Gustavus hesitated to accept it. Had he known that Elliot was acting without official instructions he might have slighted the offer. In truth, Elliot was acting only on the general direction, that he was "to prevent by every means any change in the relative situation of the Northern nations." If this formula was vague, it was wide; and it sufficed, along with the more definite support from Berlin, to decide the fate of Sweden. Gustavus at once resolved to place himself wholly in Elliot's hands. The latter therefore made his way to the Danish headquarters; while the King proceeded to Gothenburg.[1] At that fortress the spirit of the defenders was as scanty as the means of defence. But affairs took on a new aspect when, at nightfall of 3rd October, a drenched and weary horseman sought admittance at their gate. A tumult of joy arose in the town when it was known that Gustavus was in their midst, the precursor of succouring bands. Now there was no thought of surrender.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 14. Elliot to Carmarthen, 17th September. He states that Ewart had strongly urged him to go and see the King of Sweden in person. So, once again, we note the daring and initiative of Ewart. For a sharp critique on Ewart's excess of zeal see Luckwaldt, "Zur Vorgeschichte der Konvention von Reichenbach" (Berlin, G. Stilke, 1908), 237-9.

[2] The statements of Keene ("F. O.," Sweden, 7) imply that the King was at the end of his resources at Stockholm, and had but a limited success among the dalesmen. They rebut the statements in the "Memoir of Hugh Elliot," 304.

Nevertheless, things would have gone hard with the burghers had the Danes pushed their attack home. This they seemed about to do. Elliot in his interview at their headquarters made little impression on the Prince Royal and the Commander-in-Chief, the Prince of Hesse. Their kinship to Gustavus seemed but to embitter their hostility; and they undoubtedly hoped, after the reduction of Gothenburg, to dismember the Swedish realm, and aggrandise the closely related houses of Russia and Denmark. They pressed on to Gothenburg and made ready for an assault. But in the meantime Gustavus, receiving help from seamen on British vessels in the harbour, encouraged the citizens to make ready and man the guns. So firm a front did the defenders present that the Danes on 9th October assented to Elliot's offer of an armistice of eight days. Within that time the Prussian Declaration reached their headquarters, and lust of conquest now gave way to fear of a Prussian invasion of Jutland. Again therefore Elliot succeeded in prolonging the armistice, which finally was extended to six months (13th November—13th May 1789).

It is clear, then, that the initiative boldly taken by Ewart and Elliot, backed by the threats from Berlin, saved Sweden from a position of acute danger. The King of Sweden himself confessed in a letter to Armfelt that Elliot's *grand coup* in effecting an armistice had saved his kingdom, had restored the balance of Europe, and covered England with glory. Erskine, British Consul at Gothenburg, also declared that but for "the spirited and unremitted exertions of Mr. Elliot, there is not a doubt but this city and province would have fallen into the hands of the enemy on their first advancing."[1] Elliot also described his achievements in flamboyant terms, which were called forth by an unmerited rebuke of our Foreign Office, that his instructions were to restore peace, not to threaten the Danes with war.[2] His reply of 15th November ran as follows: "The success of my efforts has been almost miraculous. . . . Had I arrived at Carlstadt twenty-four hours later than I did; had I negotiated with less *energy* or success at Gothenburg than what has drawn upon me the resentment of Russia and the abettors of the boundless ambition of that Court, the *Revolution* in Sweden was compleated, and a combination formed in the North equally hostile to England and Prussia." He then charged Bernstorff with duplicity in expressing a desire for peace, "while the Danes were marching on an almost defenceless town, the capture of which decided irrevocably the fate of Sweden and the Baltic." . . . "Six weeks after my arrival in Sweden a victorious army of 12,000 men, animated by the presence of their Prince, in sight of a most brilliant conquest, were checked in their progress by my single efforts; were induced to evacuate the Swedish territories, and consented to a truce of six months. . . . Perhaps in the annals of history there is not to be found a more striking testimony of deference paid by a foreign prince to a King of England than what the Prince Royal of Denmark manifested upon this trying occasion." He then stated that the efforts of the Prussian envoy were of no avail owing to the dislike in which he was held; and that only his [Elliot's] influence availed to undo the harm caused by a violent action of Gustavus III in the middle of October.

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[1] Keene on 26th September wrote that the Allies' offer of mediation had made a great impression at Stockholm. Count Düben, the Minister, thanked him for it, but said it would perplex the King, as he did not wish to disoblige France. A truce of eight months was necessary; but the King would not make peace with Russia unless Russian Finland were restored to him.

It would be interesting to know what Pitt thought of this bombast; but on 5th December Carmarthen guardedly commended the magniloquent envoy, and urged him to gain over Denmark to the Triple Alliance; for, as Catharine had now declined the mediation of the Allies, while Gustavus had accepted it, Denmark could justly refuse her demands for help in the next campaign. Ostensibly Denmark refused; but, owing to the profuse expenditure of the Russian Embassy at Copenhagen (estimated by our *chargé d'affaires*, Johnstone, at £500 a day[1]), Catharine gained permission to have fifteen warships from the White Sea repaired in that dockyard.

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[1] "F. O.," Sweden, 7.

[2] The rebuke may have been due to Elliot's silence; for in a P.S. to a letter of 16th October to Ewart, Elliot said: "Write everything about me to London; I have never written myself, having acted hitherto without instructions" ("F. O.," Prussia, 14). As we have seen, he had acted largely on the advice of Ewart; and Liston, on finding this out, suggested to Carmarthen the need of cautioning Ewart not to go too fast (Luckwaldt, *op. cit.*, 238).

Gustavus III no sooner found himself safe than he laid his plans for humbling his enemies both at home and abroad. He summoned a Diet, and proceeded to educate the electors in their duties by drawing up a list of the ten deputies whom the men of Stockholm should choose. They held other opinions, and sent up six declared opponents of the King.[2] On the whole, however, the Estates were with him, and he imposed a constitution on the recalcitrant Order of the Nobles, whereby he gained absolute control of foreign policy. This triumph for autocracy took place at the end of April 1789, only a week before the assembly of the States-General at Versailles, which sounded the knell of the House of Bourbon. Gustavus informed Elliot of his resolve to keep at peace with Denmark, because a war with her "would turn me from my great aim—the safety of the Ottomans and the abasement of Russia." He therefore begged Elliot to assure the prolongation of the Danish armistice for six months. That envoy had now come to see that the chief danger of Sweden lay in "the romantic projects of glory and aggrandisement formed by the Sovereign himself"; and he pointed out the need for the Allies to prescribe the terms of peace before he succumbed to the superior forces of Russia.[3] Already Catharine had announced her resolve in the words—"When Gustavus has had his say to his Diet, I will have my say to him."

With Elliot's view of things Pitt and the Duke of Leeds (formerly Marquis of Carmarthen) were in complete accord. On

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[1] "F. O.," Denmark, 10. Despatches of 30th November, 5th and 27th December. On 10th April 1789 Carmarthen assured Elliot of the desire of H. M. for a Danish alliance. He also commended him less coldly than before ("F. O.," Denmark, 11).

[2] "F. O.," Sweden, 7. Keene to Carmarthen, 30th December, 1788.

[3] "F. O.," Denmark, 11. Elliot to the Duke of Leeds, 30th May 1789.

24th June they informed him that Gustavus must not expect the Allies to make peace for him on his own terms, but only on that of the *status quo ante bellum*. In this effort England would cordially join in order to keep the balance of power in the Baltic. "I cannot," continued Leeds, "too often repeat the earnest desire of this Government to conciliate the Court of Denmark in the first instance; nor do we lose sight of another material object—I mean, a cordial and permanent connection with Russia." Above all, England would not go to war unless the balance of the Baltic Powers were seriously endangered, to the detriment of the commercial States.[1]

Here, then, we have another proof of the peaceful and cautious character of Pitt's policy. He distrusted the crowned Don Quixote of the North, was resolved to save him only on England's terms, viz., the *status quo*, and hoped that the pacification might lead up to an alliance with Denmark and finally with Russia. In fact, he kept in view the Northern System which had guided British statesmen of the earlier generation. His aims were frustrated by the shifty policy of Denmark and the vindictiveness of Catharine. "Hamlet" and "Semiramis," as Harris once termed them, thought lightly of England and longed for the partition of Sweden. Accordingly the Danish fleet convoyed the fifteen Russian men-of-war, long refitting at Copenhagen, into the Baltic, until they joined the Cronstadt squadron of twenty-six ships near Bornholm, and thereby secured for it a superiority in that sea. The Duke of Leeds sent a sharp protest to Copenhagen, with the hint that furthur actions of this kind might entail disagreeable consequences for Denmark.[2] Even with this unfair help accorded to Russia, the Swedes sustained no serious reverse either by land or sea. Gustavus summed up the results of the campaign in the words: "After fighting like madmen about every other day for two months, here we are at the same point at which we started." Nevertheless he had clogged the efforts of Catharine against the Turks, and thus enabled his allies to prolong the unequal struggle against two great empires. Neither the loss of Oczakoff, nor the accession of the less capable Sultan, Selim III, daunted the resolve of the Ottomans to continue a war which was for them an affair of religious zeal and national honour.

[1] "F. O.," Denmark, 11. Leeds to Elliot, 24th June.

[2] *Ibid.*, Leeds to Elliot, 21st August 1789.

CHAPTER XXII

PARTITION OR PACIFICATION?

He who gains nothing, loses.—CATHARINE II.

We cannot be considered as in any degree bound to support a system of an offensive nature, the great end of which appears to be aggrandisement rather than security.—PITT and the DUKE OF LEEDS, 24th June 1789.

THE excess of an evil tends to produce its own cure. The resources of two great Empires were being used for a partition of the Turkish dominions, in a way which must have led to a succession of wars without benefiting the Christians of the East. But the prospect of the aggrandisement of Russia speedily led the hardy Gustavus to strike a blow at her northern capital; and when Catharine incited the Danes to deal a counter-stroke at his unguarded rear, Great Britain and Prussia intervened to prevent the overthrow of Sweden and of the balance of power in the Baltic. Thus, forces which pressed on towards Constantinople produced a sharp reaction in widening circles and prompted States to attack or arm against their neighbours—Sweden against Russia, Denmark against Sweden, and England and Prussia against Denmark. Consequently Gustavus III might claim to have saved the Turkish Empire; for his action brought into the arena England and, to some extent, the Dutch Republic.

Less obvious but more potent was the influence of Prussia. Her forces, cantoned along the Austrian and Russian borders, halved the efforts of those Empires against the Turks and encouraged the Polish nationalists to resist Russian predominance at Warsaw. Thus, by the year 1789, instead of moving the forces of two Empires and of Poland against the Turks, Catharine found her energies clogged, her resources strained, and only one important conquest achieved, that of Oczakoff. Over against this triumph she had to set the menacing attitude of the Triple Alliance lately framed by Great Britain, Prussia, and the Dutch Republic.

For a time the Czarina cherished the hope that the insanity of George III, and the accession of the Regent, would lead to the downfall of Pitt and the reversal of British policy. On $\frac{8}{19}$ December 1788 she wrote to her ambassador at London, Count Vorontzoff (Woronzow), charging him to make overtures to Fox and the Dukes of Portland and Devonshire for the renewal of the Anglo-Russian alliance, which for the last five years she had spurned. With a vehemence of style, in which feelings figured as facts, she inveighed against Pitt for slighting her many offers of friendship, for allowing Ainslie and Elliot to incite Turkey and Sweden to attack her, and for entangling himself in the dangerous and visionary schemes of Hertzberg. All this, however, would be changed when the Prince of Wales and Fox came to power.

On $\frac{19}{30}$ January Vorontzoff replied that he had seen Fox, who accorded him a hearty welcome, and said that in a fortnight the Regency would be established. He (Fox) would then be Foreign Secretary, and would be able to speak of England's treaty obligations to Prussia. The language of Fox showed some measure of caution, and partly palliated the gross imprudence of according an interview at all. A little later (perhaps before receiving Vorontzoff's answer) the Empress expressed her admiration of the reply sent by the Prince of Wales (it was really Burke's and Sheridan's) to Pitt, as it argued distinguished talents. The Prince and Fox, she said, would certainly prevent their people being dragged at the heel of Prussia. As for herself, she declared her wish to grant them a commercial treaty, which she had refused two years before. The correspondence throws a curious light on the feline diplomacy of Catharine and on the singular folly of Fox.[1] It also prepares us for the unpatriotic part which he played in the Anglo-Russian dispute of the year 1791. The recovery of George III, about the time when Catharine indited the latter epistle, pricked the bubble, and left Pitt in a position of greater power than ever.

Thus, in the spring of 1789, the general position was somewhat as follows. England, Prussia, and Holland, acting in close concert, were resolved to prevent any revolutionary

[1] "Vorontzoff Archives," xvi, 258-67.

changes in the Baltic. This implied that Denmark could not attack Sweden, and that Gustavus might war against Catharine until she chose to accept the mediation of the Allies for the re-establishment of the *status quo ante bellum*. As for the other Powers, France was almost a nullity owing to the internal troubles which were leading up to the Revolution. Spain was friendly to the Allies and favoured the cause of Sweden and Turkey.[1] Moreover the Poles, acting on hints from Berlin, were beginning to shake off Russian tutelage and to feel their way towards a drastic reform of their chaotic polity. Early in 1789 the Prussian Court sought for a close political and commercial union with Poland. The ensuing compact freed the Poles from the obligations contracted by King Stanislaus with his former mistress, Catharine II; it further promised to bind their realm to England and Holland; above all, it opened up vast possibilities for the regeneration of that hapless people.

As for the concert of the two Empires, discords were already heard. Joseph II, alarmed at the turmoil in Hungary and Belgium, as well as disgusted at the results of his first Turkish campaign, talked of waging merely a defensive war, and of offering easy terms to the Ottomans. Potemkin, puffed up by the capture of Oczakoff, announced his resolve that Moldavia and Wallachia should never fall to the Hapsburgs—an aim that had been distinctly formulated at Vienna. Russia herself, a prey to the greedy gang who fawned on the Empress and drained her treasury, seemed unable to bear for long the strain of war on two frontiers, and of precautionary measures against Prussia. The Court of Berlin, as Mirabeau had pointed out, was honeycombed by intrigues and favouritism; but it was sound at the core compared with Russia. The French author of the "Secret Memoirs of the Court of St. Petersburg" states that in the declining years of Catharine the Russian finances were exploited in a way more disgraceful than even France had seen; that none were so little as the great; and that officers notoriously lived on the funds of their regiments. Catharine herself once jauntily remarked about a colonel—"Well! If he be poor, it is his own fault; for he has long had a regiment." It speaks volumes for the patriotism and stupidity of the troops that they still had enough of the old Muscovite staunchness to carry them to victory over the Turks.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 15. Ewart to Carmarthen, 17th January 1789.

But such was the case. In the campaigns of 1789 the army of Suvóroff gained several successes, and the troops of Joseph II, once more urged onwards by that ruler, also had their meed of triumph.

This was partly due to the death of Abdul Hamid I, which brought to the Ottoman throne a feebler successor, Selim III (April 1789). The Grand Vizier, the soul of the war party, was soon overthrown, and the next commander-in-chief, the Pacha of Widdin, impaired by his slothfulness the fighting power of the Ottomans.[1] Belgrade and Semendria were lost. But even more serious, perhaps, than these reverses was the emergence of plans at Berlin which portended gain to Prussia at the expense of Turkey. We are concerned here with European affairs only so far as they affected British policy, and must therefore concentrate our attention on the statecraft of the years 1789 and 1790, which threatened sweeping changes on the Continent and brought into play the cautious conservatism of Pitt. The French Revolution and its immense consequences will engage our attention later.

As we saw in Chapter XVI, the Prussian statesman, Hertzberg, had long been maturing an ingenious scheme for the aggrandisement of Prussia, by a general shuffling together of boundaries in the East of Europe.[2] On 13th May 1789 he presented it in its complete form to Frederick William, who, after long balancings on this question, now accorded his consent. The Prussian monarch thereby pledged himself, at a favourable occasion, to offer his armed mediation to Russian, Austria, and Turkey. If the two Empires overcame the Sultan, as seemed probable, Prussia was to threaten their frontiers with masses of troops and, under threat of war, compel them to accept her terms. If, however, victory inclined to the crescent, Dietz, the Prussian envoy at Constantinople, was to remind the Sublime Porte that the triumph was largely due to Prussia's action in enabling Sweden to continue the war against Russia, and in thwarting Catharine's plan of an invasion of Turkey by the Poles. Dietz was also to hint

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[1] On 22nd May Ainslie reported the slothful preparations for war. He had stated earlier that Russian money was at work at Constantinople to bring about a mediation by the Bourbon Courts in favour of peace ("F. O.," Turkey, 10).

[2] See Häusser, i, 225-37, for its earlier developments; also for the more warlike plans at Berlin of a general alliance with Poland, England, Sweden, and Denmark for the humbling of Russia and Austria.

"in a delicate and not threatening manner," that if Prussia threw her weight into the scales against the Turks, the new Coalition must speedily overwhelm her. "Therefore the Porte will do well not to balance on that point," but will accept Prussia's terms.[1] There was a third alternative, that the war would drag on indecisively, in which case the exhaustion of the belligerents must enable Prussia to work her will the more readily.

Accordingly Hertzberg hoped that, however the fortunes of war inclined, he would gain his ends. They were as follows. The Turks, if victorious, must sacrifice their gains (the Crimea, etc.) at the demand of Prussia, and thus enable her to compel Austria to restore to the Poles the great province of Galicia, torn from them in the partition of 1772. The Poles in their turn were to reward Frederick William by ceding to him the fortresses of Danzig and Thorn, along with part of Great Poland, which so inconveniently divided Prussia's eastern lands.

The same general result was to follow in the event of Russia and Austria driving back the Turks to their last natural barrier, the Balkans. Prussia was then to draw the sword on behalf of Turkey and Sweden, restore the balance in the South-East, and give the law to all parties. In that case, it appeared (though Hertzberg wavered on this point), Austria might acquire Moldavia and Wallachia from Turkey, and thereby close against Russia the door leading to the Balkans. At times Hertzberg stated that Austria must in any case gain those commanding provinces, which would sever her friendship with Russia.[2] As for Catharine, she might retain the Crimea, and gain land perhaps as far as the Dniester. On the whole, however, Hertzberg hoped that Prussia need not go to war, but that the Turks would make a good enough stand at the Danube to enable the mere appearance of the splendid army of Prussia on the frontiers of the two Empires to enforce his demands.

Much has been written for and against this scheme. Among the many projects of that time it holds a noteworthy place. Certainly it would greatly have simplified the boundaries of Eastern Europe. The recovery by Poland of her natural frontier on the south-west, the Carpathians, would strengthen that State, and enable her, with the help of her Prussian ally, to defy the wrath of the two Imperial Courts. Hertzberg believed that the Poles would gladly accept the offer. For was not the great province of Galicia worth the smaller, though commercially valuable, districts on the lower Vistula which would go to Frederick William? Further, would not a good commercial treaty between the Allies (in which England, it was hinted, might have her share) make up for the loss of the prosperous city of Danzig? In truth, the proposal reminds one of the schemes for scientific frontiers which Rousseau outlined and Napoleon reduced to profitable practice.

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[1] I quote from the instructions drawn up by Hertzberg on 26th May, for Dietz, which he imparted to Ewart, who sent them on to Whitehall on 28th May —a step which earned him the distrust of Hertzberg ("F. O.," Prussia, 15). The Pitt Ministry knew of them earlier than other Courts.

[2] Dembinski, i, 240.

It might have succeeded had nations been mere amoebae, divisible at will. Traders and philosophers might acclaim Hertzberg as the Adam Smith of Prussia and Poland. In truth, his plan was defensible, even on its Machiavellian side—the aggrandisement of Prussia, ultimately at the expense of the Turks. For it might be argued that the ultimate triumph of the crescent was impossible, and that only the action of Sweden, Prussia, and to a less extent England, could avert disaster. Hertzberg also claimed that Prussia and her Allies should guarantee to Turkey the security of her remaining possessions, and deemed this a set-off to the disappointments brought by his other proposals.

Nevertheless the balance of argument was heavily against the scheme. As the Pitt Cabinet pointed out in a weighty pronouncement on 24th June, Hertzberg proposed to use Turkey as a medium for the attainment of his ends, which were the depression of Austria and the aggrandisement of Prussia. However well and successfully the Turks fought, the gain was to accrue to Frederick William, not to the Swedes, who were fighting desperately for the Ottoman cause. True, Prussia promised in the last resort to help the Sultan to recover some of his lost provinces; but even then, the acquisitions of the two Empires at the end of costly campaigns were scarcely to balance those of Prussia and Poland. Well might the British Cabinet say of the Turks: "It seems very doubtful whether either their power or their inclination would answer the expectations of the Court of Berlin."

After this ironical touch the verdict of the Pitt Ministry was given to Ewart as follows:

You will not fail to assure the Ministers at Berlin of the satisfaction with which the King will see any real and solid advantages derived to His Prussian Majesty by such arrangements as may be obtained by way of negotiation and without the danger of extending those hostilities [which] it is so much the interest of all Europe to put an end to. We cannot but acknowledge the friendly attention manifested by His Prussian Majesty towards his Allies in taking care not to commit them in the event of the Porte acceding to the proposed plan of co-operation, the operations of which go so much beyond the spirit of our treaty of Alliance, which is purely of a defensive nature, and by which we cannot of course be considered as in any degree bound to support a system of an offensive nature, the great end of which appears to be aggrandisement rather than security, and which from its very nature is liable to provoke fresh hostilities instead of contributing to the restoration of general tranquillity.

In discussing these points, and indeed upon every other occasion, I must beg of you, Sir, to remember that it is by no means the idea of His Majesty, or of his confidential servants, to risk the engaging this country in a war on account of Turkey, either directly or indirectly; and I am to desire you would be particularly careful in your language, to prevent any intention of that nature being imputed to us. I think it necessary to mention this distinctly, as I observe in one of your dispatches, you state the continuance of the Northern War *as in some degree advantageous*, as it would be a powerful *diversion in case the Allies should take part in the Turkish War.* This I must again observe to you is an object by no means in our view.

With respect to any future guarantee of the Ottoman Empire it is impossible for us to commit ourselves at present. The consideration will naturally arise how far such a guarantee is either necessary or beneficial when the terms of peace come under discussion. The effect which a guarantee of the Turkish possessions might create in Russia likewise deserves some consideration; and I cannot but observe that the whole tenor of these Instructions [those sent to Dietz] seems likely to throw at a greater distance the chance of detaching Russia from Austria and connecting it with us; whereas hitherto it has been our object, and, as it appeared to us, that of Prussia, while we made Russia feel the disadvantage of being upon distant terms with us, and avoided doing anything which looked like courting her friendship, still to avoid pushing things to an extremity or precluding a future connection.[1]

At several points this pronouncement challenges attention. Firstly, it does not once refer to the feelings and prejudices of the peoples who were to be bartered about. Only four days previously the Commons of France had sworn by the Tennis Court Oath that they would frame a constitution for their land—a declaration which rang trumpet-tongued through England; but not the faintest echo of it appears in the official language of Pitt and the Duke of Leeds. Their arguments are wholly those of the old school, but of the old school at its best. For, secondly, they deprecate changes of territory forced by a mediating Power on the people it ostensibly befriends, which tend to their detriment and its own benefit. They question whether Prussia can press through these complex partitions without provoking a general war—the very evil which the Triple Alliance has sought to avoid. Certainly England will never go to war to bring them about; neither will she draw the sword on behalf of Turkey. On the contrary, she hopes finally to regain the friendship of Russia. Most noteworthy of all is the central criticism, that the aim of Hertzberg is "aggrandisement rather than security." We shall have occasion to observe how often Pitt used this last word to denote the end for which he struggled against Revolutionary France and Napoleon; and its presence in this despatch bespeaks the mind of the Prime Minister acting through the pen of the Duke of Leeds.

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[1] "F.O.," Prussia, 15. Leeds to Ewart, 24th June 1789.

The defensive character of Pitt's policy further appears in a despatch to Ewart, also of 24th June, cautioning that very zealous envoy that all possible means are being taken to win over Denmark peacefully to the Triple Alliance, in order that it may "command the keys of the Baltic." Gustavus is to be warned that the Allies cannot help him unless he agrees to forego his hopes of gain at the expense of Russia, and "to act merely upon the defensive." The *status quo ante bellum* would be the fairest basis of peace in the Baltic, and it would prove "that the real object of our interference was calculated for general views of public utility, and not founded upon any motives of partiality for one Power or resentment to another."

For a time events seemed to work against the pacific policy of Pitt and in favour of the schemes of Hertzberg. The summer witnessed not only the advance of the Russians and Austrians into the Danubian Provinces, but also the wrigglings to and fro of the Danish Court, which enabled the Russian squadron at Copenhagen to join the Cronstadt fleet and command the Baltic. Nevertheless, Prussia felt that she had the game in her own hands, however much her Allies might hold aloof; for the Austrian Government was distracted by news of the seething discontent of the Hungarians, of the Poles in Galicia, and, above all, of the Brabanters and Flemings. Joseph II, too, was obviously sinking under these worries, which seemed to presage the break up of his Empire.[1] The Prussian Court therefore resolved to concentrate its efforts on wresting Galicia and the Belgic Provinces from the Hapsburg Power, especially as the Porte, despite its recent defeats, refused to listen to Dietz when he mentioned the cession of Moldavia and Wallachia to the infidels.[2] Until the Moslems had learnt the lessons of destiny, it was obviously desirable to set about robbing Austria by more straightforward means.

The folly of Joseph II favoured this scheme of robbery. His reforms in the Belgic Provinces had long brought that naturally conservative people to the brink of revolt, so that in the spring of the year 1789 plans were laid not only at Brussels but also at Berlin for securing their independence. Hertzberg sought to work upon the fears of Pitt by hinting that Austria might call in the French troops to stamp out the discontent—a contingency far from unlikely, were it not that France was rapidly sliding into the abyss of bankruptcy and revolution. By a curious coincidence the repressive authority of Joseph II was exerted on 18th June, the day after the Third Estate of France defiantly styled itself the National Assembly. While Paris was jubilant at the news of this triumph, the mandates of the Emperor swept away the Estates and ancient privileges of Brabant. As this action involved the suppression of the ancient charter of privileges, quaintly termed *La Joyeuse Entrée*, the Brabanters put into practice its final clause, that the citizens might use force against the sovereign who infringed its provisions. "Act here as in Paris" ran the placards in Brussels and other cities. The capture of the Bastille added fuel to the fire in Belgium; and the nationalist victory was completed by a rising of the men of Liége against the selfish and deadening rule of their Prince Bishop.[1]

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 15. Ewart to Leeds, 12th July. In it he pointed out that the alternative Prussian plan, that of forcing Turkey to give up Moldavia and Wallachia to Austria, she giving up Galicia to the Poles, and they Danzig and Thorn to Prussia, was most objectionable; but Hertzberg felt able to force even that through. Leeds commended Ewart for opposing those extreme proposals.

[2] *Ibid.* Ewart to Leeds, 10th and 11th August, 3rd September. It is not surprising to find from Ainslie's letter of 22nd October to Ewart that the Porte distrusted all the Christian Powers (France and Spain were still offering their mediation) but England least ("F. O.," Turkey, 10). Dietz held scornfully aloof from Ainslie, and played his own game.

The likeness between the Belgian and French Revolutions is wholly superficial. Despite the effort of Camille Desmoulins to link the two movements in sympathy—witness the title of his newspaper "Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant"—no thinking man could confound the democratic movement in France with the narrowly national and clerical aims of the majority in Brabant and Flanders. True, an attempt was made by a few progressives, under the lead of Francis Vonck, to inculcate the ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau; but the influence of the Roman Church, always paramount in Flanders, availed to crush this effort. Van der Noot and the clericals gained the upper hand, and finally compelled the Vonckists to flee over the southern border.

In the month of July Van der Noot declared in favour of a Belgian Republic under the guarantee and protection of England, Prussia, and Holland. He set on foot overtures to this end which met with a friendly response at Berlin and The Hague.[2] The Prussian Court sent General Schliessen to discuss the matter with the British Government; but Pitt and Leeds behaved very guardedly on a question involving a recognition of the Belgian revolt and the end of the Barrier System on which we had long laid so much stress. Their despatch of 14th September to Ewart emphasized the difficulties attending Van der Noot's proposal, even if his statements were correct. At the same time Ministers asserted that the Allies must at all costs prevent the Belgians becoming dependent on France, a noteworthy statement which foreshadows Pitt's later policy of resisting the annexation of those rich provinces to the French Republic or Empire. For the present, he strongly advised Prussia and Holland to await the course of events and do nothing "to threaten the interruption of that tranquillity it is so much their interest, and, I trust, their intention, to preserve." Above all, it would be well to wait for the death of Joseph II, already announced as imminent, seeing that his successor might grant to the Belgians the needed concessions.[1]

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[1] "Corresp. of W. A. Miles," ii, 142.

[2] Letter of the Grand Pensionary of 1st August, in Ewart's despatch of 10th August ("F. O.," Prussia, 16).

The Belgians seem to have trusted the Pitt Cabinet far more than Hertzberg, whose restless policy aroused general distrust. They made two overtures to the British Court. The former of these, strange to say, came through a French nobleman, the Comte de Charrot, who called on Lord Robert Fitzgerald, our envoy at Paris, on or about 21st October, and confided to him his resentment against France, his warm sympathies with the Belgians (he was a descendant of the old Counts of Flanders), and his fear that France would dominate that land after the downfall of Austrian authority. He besought Fitzgerald to forward to the Duke of Leeds a letter warning the Cabinet of the efforts of the National Assembly to form a party among the Brabanters and Flemings, who, however, were resolved not to accept the rule of a foreign prince, but to form a Republic under the protection of Great Britain. To this end they were willing to place in her hands the city of Ostend as a pledge of their fidelity to the British connection. A German prince, he added, would never be tolerated, save in the eastern provinces, Limburg and Luxemburg. His letter, dated Antwerp, 15th October, to the Duke of Leeds, is couched in the same terms.[2]

The proposal opens up a vista of the possibilities of that strange situation. By planting the British flag at Ostend, and by allowing Prussia to dominate the eastern Netherlands, Pitt could have built up once more a barrier on the north-east of France. All this was possible, provided that Charrot's proposals were genuine and represented the real feelings of the Belgians. Evidently Pitt and Leeds distrusted the offer, which seems to have been left unanswered.

Early in November, when the plans of the Belgian patriots for ousting the Austrians were nearing completion, they sent as spokesman Count de Roode to appeal for the protection of George III. Pitt laid the request before the King; and the result will be seen in Pitt's letter to the Count:

> Downing St. *Nov.* 13, 1789.
>
> I have received the letter which you honoured me with, informing me that you were employed on the part of the people of Brabant to

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 15. Leeds to Ewart, 14th September 1789.

[2] "F. O.," France, 33. Fitzgerald to Leeds, 22nd October 1789.

solicit the King's protection, and desiring to see me for the purpose of delivering a letter to me on that subject. I thought it my duty to lay these circumstances before His Majesty, who has not been pleased to authorize me to enter into any discussion in consequence of an application which does not appear to be made by any regular or acknowledged authority. I must therefore, Sir, beg you to excuse me, if, on that account, I am under the necessity of declining seeing you for the purpose which you propose.[1]

Somewhat earlier the Duke of Orleans had come on a mission to London, ostensibly on the Belgian Question, but really for a term of forced absence from Paris. It will therefore be well to describe his visit in a later chapter.

Cold as were Pitt's replies to de Roode, he certainly kept a watchful eye on Belgian affairs. For, on the one hand, if Joseph II succeeded in establishing despotic power at Brussels, he would gain complete control over the finances and armed forces of that flourishing land, with results threatening to the Dutch and even to Prussia. If, however, the Brabanters succeeded as the Flemings had done, French democracy might rush in as a flood and gallicize the whole of that land to the detriment of England. Pitt therefore approved of the Prussian proposal to send troops to occupy the Bishopric of Liége, seeing that the deposed bishop had appealed to Austria for armed aid. With the prestige gained by the military occupation of Liége, Hertzberg hoped to dominate the situation both in the Low Countries and in the East. Most pressingly did he urge the need of instantly recognizing the independence of the Belgian provinces; but after long arguments Ewart convinced him that it might be better, even for Prussia, to press for the restoration of their old constitution, with all its limitations to the power of the Emperor, under the guarantee of the three Allies. If Ewart succeeded with Hertzberg, he failed with Frederick William, who on that and other occasions showed himself "very elated" and determined to tear from Austria that valuable possession, as well as Galicia.[2] Hertzberg did his utmost to persuade England to combine the two questions so as the more to embarrass Austria; but he met with steady refusals.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 102. The Count renewed his proposal early in 1790, but received a similar rebuff on 1st February 1790.

[2] "F. O.," Prussia, 16. Ewart to Leeds, 28th November and 8th December 1789.

On 30th November Pitt took the sense of the Cabinet. It was clearly in favour of non-intervention and the restoration as far as possible of the previous state of things. Nevertheless, the men of Brabant, in case of defeat by the Imperialists, were encouraged to hope that the Allies would declare for the restoration of the old constitution. On the other hand, in case of victory, they were to be induced "to take steps for preventing the prevalence of democratical principles."[1] Obviously, then, Pitt desired to keep out both Prussian and French influence, and to leave the Belgians free to come to terms with the successor of Joseph II after the imminent demise of that monarch. Events favoured this solution. In December Brussels and all parts of Brabant shook off the yoke of the Imperialists, who retired to Luxemburg. Early in the year 1790 deputies from the nine Belgic provinces met at Brussels, declared the deposition of Joseph, and formed a Federal Congress for mutual protection. The clerical and conservative party, headed by Van der Noot, sent to Paris an appeal for support, which found no favour either with Louis or the National Assembly, the King desiring not to offend Austria, and the French deputies distrusting the aims of the majority at Brussels.

Pitt and his colleagues were equally cautious. On the news of the successful revolt of Brussels, they seemed for a time to incline to the Prussian plan of recognizing the independence of Belgium,[2] and on 9th January 1790 they framed a compact with Prussia and Holland with a view to taking common action in this affair. But the most urgent demands from Berlin in favour of immediate action failed to push Pitt on to this last irrevocable step. It does not appear that the King controlled his action; for at that time he was so far absorbed in the escapades of his sons (those of Prince Edward were an added trouble) as to be a cipher in all but domestic concerns. Pitt and Leeds therefore had a free hand. They were influenced probably by the news that Joseph, despite the progress of his mortal disease, had resolved to subdue the Netherlands. The tidings opened up two alternatives—war between Austria and Prussia, or the possibility of a peaceful compromise after the death of Joseph and the accession of his far more tractable brother, Leopold.

These seem to have been the motives underlying the decision of the Pitt Cabinet, early in 1790, to defer any decisive action by the Allies. The Duke of Leeds pointed out to Ewart on 9th February that the feuds between the Belgic provinces made them useless as allies; that any immediate recognition of their independence would have "mischievous effects"; and that a reconciliation between them and their future ruler seemed highly probable. They should, therefore, not be encouraged to hope for recognition by the Allies. Leeds closed by very pertinently asking the Court of Berlin "how far this new Republic, once established, could be (and by whom) prevented from becoming indirectly, if not directly, totally dependent upon France." The argument derived added force from the fact that a "French emissary" was then at Brussels offering the recognition by France of the proposed Belgian Republic, with the help of 20,000 troops against any who should oppose it.[1] This offer was not official; but as the moods of the National Assembly varied day by day, it might at any time become so. Certainly the chance of French invervention added a sting to the reproaches soon to be levelled at Pitt from Berlin.

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[1] "Leeds Memoranda," 147.

[2] "F. O.," Prussia, 16. Leeds to Ewart, 13th December 1789.

They were called forth by the missive above referred to, and by a "secret and confidential" despatch of the same date. In the latter Pitt and Leeds warned Ewart that the proposed armed mediation of Prussia against Catharine and Joseph was outside the scope of the Triple Alliance. The British Government wished Prussia the success which might be expected from the power of her army, the flourishing state of her revenue, and the present doubtful condition both of Russia and Austria; but it could not participate in "measures adopted without the previous concurrence of the Allies."[2]

A storm of obloquy broke upon Ewart when he announced these decisions. The Court of Berlin insisted on the need of immediately recognizing Belgian independence, adding a threat that otherwise those provinces would do well to throw themselves upon France. Our ambassador partly succeeded in stilling the storm, especially when news came of tumults at Brussels and the uncertainty of the outlook throughout Brabant. Frederick William then recognized the wisdom of waiting until affairs were more settled, but he declared that he "was abandoned by his Allies," and that, unless Galicia could be detached from Austria, he would prefer to see the Netherlands go to France.[1] This piece of royal pettishness served at least to show that his friendship for England depended on her serving his designs against Austria.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 17. Ewart to Leeds, 18th February 1790. I can find neither in our archives nor in the Pitt MSS. any confirmation of the statement of Father Delplace ("Joseph II et la Rév. Brabançonne," 148) that Pitt suggested to the "ambassador" of the Belgian Estates their election of the Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and that the ambassador demurred, because he was a Protestant. Pitt never recognized any Belgian envoy as having official powers, and took no step that implied Belgian independence.

[2] "F. O.," Prussia, 17.

Here was the weakness of the Triple Alliance. The Allies had almost nothing in common, except that the British and Dutch both wished to live in peace and develop their trade. Prussia, on the contrary, saw in this time of turmoil the opportunity of consolidating her scattered Eastern lands by a scheme not unlike the Belgic-Bavarian Exchange. On the score of morality we may censure such plans; but vigorous and growing States will push them on while their rivals are abased, and will discard Allies who oppose them. In this contrariety of interests lay the secret of the weakness of the Anglo-Prussian alliance during the upheavals of the near future. It also happened that the House of Hohenzollern matured these plans at the very time when the fortunes of the House of Hapsburg, after touching their nadir, began once more to rise; and the revival of Austria under Leopold II helped Pitt to maintain the existing order of things in Central Europe against all the schemings of Hertzberg. The success of Pitt in this work of statesmanlike conservation marks the climax of his diplomatic career; and, as it has never received due attention, I make no apology for treating it somewhat fully in the following chapter.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 17. Ewart to Leeds, 22nd February 1790.

CHAPTER XXIII

PARTITION OR PACIFICATION (CONTINUED)

I want the trumpet of an angel to proclaim to the ears of sovereigns that it is become their universal interest as well as their moral duty to have a period of peace.—LORD AUCKLAND TO SIR ROBERT MURRAY KEITH, 7th May 1790.

PROBABLY at no time in the history of Europe have all the leading States been so bent on plans of mutual spoliation as in the closing weeks of the life of Joseph II of Austria. The failure of his schemes and the probability of a break up of the Hapsburg dominions whetted the appetites of all his neighbours and brought Europe to the verge of a general war. In these circumstances it was providential that one Great Power stood for international morality, and that its counsels were swayed by a master-mind. The future of Europe depended on the intelligent conservatism of Pitt and the duration of the life of his political opposite, Joseph II. That life had long been wearing rapidly away; and on 20th February 1790 he died, full of pain, disappointment, and regret that crowned the tragedy of his career.

His death brought new life and hopes to the Hapsburg peoples. The new sovereign, Leopold II, his brother, soon proved to be one of the astutest rulers of that race. He has been termed the only ruler of that age who correctly read the signs of the times.[1] If Joseph was called the crowned philosopher, Leopold may be styled the crowned diplomatist. Where the former gave the rein to the impulses of Voltairian philosophy and romantic idealism, his successor surveyed affairs with a calculating prudence which resulted, perhaps, from the patriarchal size of his family—he had twelve children—and from his long rule in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.[2] Certainly he knew how impossible it was to thrust advanced Liberal ideas and central institutions on the tough and unenlightened peoples of the Hapsburg realm. Above all he discerned the folly of aggressive foreign policy while all was turmoil at home. He therefore prepared to pacify his subjects before the war cloud hanging over the Riesengebirge burst upon Bohemia.

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[1] Lord Acton, "Lects. on Mod. Hist.," 304.

[2] Keith's "Mems.," ii, 257.

His caution and pliability opened up a new future for Central Europe. Had the headstrong and pertinacious Joseph lived much longer (though some gleams of prudence lighted on him in his last months) revolts could scarcely have been staved off in Hungary and the Low Countries, where even his belated concessions inspired distrust. Above all, he could never have coped with the forceful policy of Prussia. There is little room for doubt that the continuance of his life would have involved the loss of the Belgic provinces, Galicia, and, perhaps, even Bohemia. The Hohenzollerns would have leaped to heights of power that would always challenge to conflict; and Europe, a prey to Revolution in the West, must have been torn at the heart by deadly strifes, both dynastic and racial.

In closing the sluices against the currents about to be let loose at Berlin, Pitt had latterly counted on the well-known prudence of Leopold of Tuscany. On 26th February, before the decease of Joseph was known in London, the British Government stiffly opposed the Prussian plan of acknowledging the independence of the Austrian Netherlands. Great Britain—so ran the despatch to Ewart, our envoy to Berlin—had covenanted merely to prevent the Emperor making "an unrestrained use of the wealth and population" of those provinces, and to obviate the possibility of their going to swell the power of France. England (added Pitt in a side note of his own) must counteract French intrigues in Brabant; but they were unofficial, and would probably fail.[1] He therefore deprecated any action which must lead to a war with Austria; but he offered to help Prussia in restoring the former state of things in the Low Countries. Stress was then laid on "the necessity of enabling Sweden to defend herself by another campaign against Russia"; England would pay her part of the sum needed for the support of Gustavus, and would also secure the neutrality of Denmark; but war against Russia and Austria was denounced as altogether foreign to our cardinal principle of restoring the former condition of things. Pitt and Leeds closed their despatch with the following noteworthy words:

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[1] On 19th March Fitzgerald reported to Leeds ("F. O.," France, 34): "M. Van der Noote has made a second application to His Most Christian Majesty and the National Assembly, which has met with a similar reception with [*sic*] the former, the letters having been returned unopened." Lafayette moved an amendment, but it was shelved.

> The commencement of hostilities against the Imperial Courts, either indirectly by an immediate recognition of the Belgic Independence, or directly by our joining in the measures of offensive operations which Prussia may feel it her interest to adopt, would go beyond the line which this country has uniformly laid down, and from which it does not appear that the present circumstances should induce her to depart. If either the joint representations of the Allies, or the subsequent measures such as they have been here stated, should be successful in bringing about a peace on the terms of the *status quo*, this country would then be willing to include Turkey, Poland, and Sweden in the alliance and to guarantee to them the terms of that pacification.[1]

In order to understand the importance of this pronouncement, we must remember that at this time the chances of success attending the dismembering schemes of the two Empires and those of Prussia were curiously equal. In bulk Russia and Austria had the advantage. Their armies also seemed likely to drive the Turks over the Balkans in the next campaign, unless potent diversions in the rear impaired their striking power. But these diversions were imminent. The fate of the Hapsburg dominions still hovered in the balance. Catharine was face to face with another Swedish campaign which her exhausted exchequer could scarcely meet. How then could these two Empires withstand the shock of 200,000 trained Prussians, with the prospect that an Anglo-Dutch fleet would sweep the Russian warships from the sea? And this was not all. Hertzberg had already detached Poland from the Russian alliance and was on the point of adding the resources of that kingdom to his own;[2] and the prospect of consolidating Poland, both politically and geographically, opened up hopeful vistas for that interesting people and the whole European polity. Above all it promised to strengthen Prussia on her weakest flank.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 17. Leeds to Ewart, 26th February. Several sentences of the draft of this despatch are in Pitt's writing.

[2] Dembinski, i, 62-73, 274-8.

It is not surprising, then, that the ambitious and enterprising Dietz exceeded his instructions by signing a treaty with the Porte on 31st January 1790. He thereby pledged Prussia to make war on Russia and Austria in the spring, and not to lay down her arms until she secured for the Sultan an "honourable and stable peace," which assured safety for Constantinople against an attack by sea. If the Turks were victorious, Prussia promised to secure the Crimea for them. The Sultan, on his side, promised to compel Austria to restore Galicia to the Poles, who were, if possible, to be brought into the Triple Alliance. Finally Prussia, England, Holland, Sweden, and Poland were to guarantee the Turkish possessions as then defined.

These grandiose designs were furthered by the Prusso-Polish treaty, signed at Warsaw on 29th March. By it Frederick William, in case of hostilities, would send 18,000 men to assist the Republic, which would send 8,000 horsemen and half that number of footmen, or an equivalent in money or corn.[1] In case of great need the numbers of troops might be raised to 30,000 and 20,000 respectively. More important than this material succour was the advantage of marching through Polish Volhynia down the valley of the Dniester to cut the communications of the Russian army on the lower Danube. Meanwhile the Poles would overrun Galicia, and the Prussians invade Bohemia and Moravia for the purpose of inciting the Czechs and Hungarians to open revolt. On the whole the chances of war favoured Frederick William and his Allies, especially when the British Government agreed to join with Prussia in subsidizing Sweden for the campaign of 1790. The valour of the Swedes and their nearness to the Russian capital compelled Catharine to concentrate her efforts largely against them, and the prospect of a Prusso-Polish alliance aroused grave fears at Petersburg. "Everyone here wears a look of consternation," wrote the Prussian envoy to his Court on 5th February. Probably this explains the passing flirtation of Catharine with England, which Pitt seems to have taken at its true value, in view of the exorbitant terms previously offered by her to Gustavus.[1]

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[1] Hertzberg, "Recueil," iii, 1-8. Ewart reported on 4th January 1790 that Hertzberg was holding over the Polish treaty, and that it would be wholly "vague and ostensible." Clearly Ewart thought that Hertzberg would leave the door open to coerce Poland into giving up Danzig and Thorn ("F. O.," Prussia, 17). Article 2 of the treaty made this still possible. See, too, Frederick William's letter of 11th April 1790 to the King of Poland, and the projected treaty of commerce, in Martens, iv, 126-35.

The statement of the "Ann. Reg." of 1791 (p. 12), that the Triple Alliance became "a species of Sextuple Alliance," by the inclusion of Poland, the Porte, and Sweden, is incorrect.

In fact, the air was charged with insincerity and intrigue. The Prussian alliance with the Poles, which might have brought salvation to that distracted people, was accompanied with extremely hard conditions. Hertzberg saw in it the opportunity of once more forcing on his scheme of gaining Danzig and Thorn in return for the halving of the Prussian duties on Polish trade down the Vistula. His Shylock-like insistence on these terms deprived the compact of all worth from the outset; for the Poles claimed, and with reason, that the cession of those valuable districts should be bought, not by the halving of certain customs dues, but by the recovery of the whole of Galicia from Austria. In these demands the Court of Berlin seemed to concur; but ultimately, as we shall see, it allowed them to be frittered away under pressure from Vienna. As a result, the Poles felt no less distrust of Prussia than of the two Empires; and our envoy at Warsaw, Daniel Hailes, found that British policy alone inspired a feeling of confidence, and that a keen desire prevailed for a close alliance with England.[2]

Pitt also, guided by our naval experts, who wished England to be freed from dependence on Russia for naval stores, saw the advantage of a compact with Poland, provided her trade were freed from Prussian shackles. But his hands were so far tied by his alliance with Prussia, that he supported her demand for Danzig (not Thorn), if it were accompanied by an enlightened commercial treaty in which England might have a share. Events soon proved that greed rather than enlightenment prevailed at Berlin. That Court clung to its demand for Danzig and Thorn, and its envoy at Warsaw, the subtle, scheming, and masterful Lucchesini, more than once showed a disposition to hark back to the policy of Frederick the Great, and to choke the disputes with Austria and Russia by a partition of Poland.[3]

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[1] Dembinski, i, 281, 283, 285.

[2] "F. O.," Poland, 4. Hailes to Leeds, 6th and 7th January, 27th February, 29th March 1790.

[3] *Ibid.* On 14th August Hailes reported a remark of Lucchesini, that Prussia could easily seize Danzig and Thorn at the next war. Lucchesini was replaced by the young and inexperienced von Goltz in October. For a sketch of Lucchesini see Keith's "Mems.," ii, 360.

For a time this seemed to be the natural upshot of an *entente* which unexpectedly came about between Berlin and Vienna. Not long after his accession Leopold wrote to his brother of Prussia in the terms of sensibility then in vogue. Frederick William answered in equally effusive strains; and but for the austere domination of the old Chancellor, Kaunitz, at Vienna, and the "turbulent genius" of Hertzberg at Berlin, there seemed a faint hope of a reconciliation.[1] But Kaunitz knew well how to keep up the bitterness against the upstart Protestant State; and Hertzberg had resolved to keep his master up to the high level of his own ambitions. Ingeniously he sowed the seeds of discord between the Imperial Courts by suggesting that Catharine should accept the mediation of the Allies with a view to a peace with the Porte.[2] This would leave Austria at the mercy of Prussia, and involve the loss of Galicia and the Netherlands. This last topic lay near to the heart of his Sovereign. Lord Auckland wrote thus on 19th March from his new Embassy at The Hague: "I have the fullest evidence that nothing less than absolute and inevitable necessity will induce him [Frederick William II] to contribute by word or deed to replacing the Netherlands under their old Government." And three weeks later he expressed his astonishment that, in view of the widespread anarchy, Prussia and all Governments should not feel it their prime duty to restore those ideas of order and just subordination to legal authority which the world so urgently needed. Otherwise the European fabric would be sapped by French theories and succumb to a new series of barbarian invasions.[3]

These were the views of Pitt, though he expressed them with less nervous vehemence. His aim, and that of his colleagues, was to bring Austria first, and afterwards Russia, to a pacification. They reminded the Court of Berlin that Leopold had "neither the same predilection for Russia, the same jealousy of Prussia, [n]or dislike to the mediation of England" as Joseph had displayed, and that the *status quo* might now find favour at Vienna. Leopold, they added, could not possibly accept the last proposal of Hertzberg, of ceding Galicia to the Poles on condition of being allowed to regain the Netherlands.[1] The British Cabinet also, on 30th March, charged Keith to press for an immediate armistice between Austria and Turkey, with a view to summoning a Congress of the Powers for a general pacification, which Great Britain earnestly desired. But, they added, with a touch of guile, as it would take much longer to communicate with St. Petersburg, they hoped that Austria would act alone, and immediately grant an armistice to the Turks. If Austria would further pledge herself to admit the restoration of the old constitution in the Netherlands, Keith might accept this as satisfactory, and send off a courier to Constantinople to warn Ainslie to bring the Porte to reason.[2]

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 20. Keith to Leeds, 3rd, 7th, and 14th April.

[2] "F. O.," Prussia, 17. Ewart to Leeds, 18th March.

[3] B.M. Add. MSS., 35542. Auckland to Keith, 19th March and 6th April 1790.

The aim of saving Austria from many dangers is here so obvious that one learns with astonishment that Kaunitz received these offers most haughtily. The belated concessions granted by Joseph on his death-bed to his malcontent subjects had met with his approval, but only, as it seems, in order to press on the war with Turkey *à outrance*, as if that, and that alone, would impose on the Court of Berlin. With senile obstinacy and old-world *hauteur*, he repulsed Keith, who thereupon executed a skilful flanking move by appealing to the Vice-Chancellor, Count Cobenzl. This astute diplomat saw the gain that might accrue from the British proposals, and assured Keith that his Sovereign had received them with "very great satisfaction." Seeing his advantage, the British envoy warned Cobenzl against the extravagant claims of Potemkin, and urged him to work hard for a separate armistice with Turkey, now that "the most upright Court in Europe" offered its good services for that purpose. He further hinted that the recent treaties of Prussia with Turkey and Poland were a serious menace to Austria, and that the British proposal now made to her was "pointed and peremptory." Finally they agreed that Kaunitz should so far be humoured as to draft the official reply, but that Cobenzl should be its interpreter on behalf of Leopold II. With this odd arrangement Keith had to put up for some weeks; and in that time the desire for peace grew apace at Vienna.[3]

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 35542. Leeds to Ewart, 19th and 30th March.

[2] "F. O.," Austria, 19. Leeds to Keith, 30th March; Ranke, "Fürstenbund," ii, 375; Kaunitz to Leopold, 16th March.

[3] *Ibid.* Keith to Leeds, 24th April, 1st and 15th May; Keith's "Mems.," ii, 261.

Any other way of looking at things was sheer madness. The ablest of Austrian Generals, Marshal Laudon, warned Leopold of the terrible risks of a war against both Prussia and Turkey. The Aulic Council also knew full well that the almost unbounded influence of Prince Potemkin over the Czarina was ever used against Hapsburg interests, that pampered favourite having sworn vengeance against all who promoted the erection of Moldavia and Wallachia, which he coveted for himself,[1] into an independent principality. This scheme, so fatal to Hapsburg hopes, played no small part in sundering the two Empires. While, therefore, Leopold armed, as if for war with Prussia, he was secretly disposed to treat for a separate peace with the Turks if they would cede to him the limits of the Peace of Passarowitz, namely, North Servia and Wallachia as far east as the River Aluta. On the other hand he was resolved (so he told Keith on 9th May) to fight rather than lose the Netherlands, and in that case intended to gain the alliance of France by a few cessions of Belgian land. Still he hoped for a peaceful settlement through "the wise and kind intervention of England."[2]

The position was now somewhat as follows: Leopold had staved off a general revolt in his dominions by soothing concessions or promises, but he insisted on the continuance of hostilities against Turkey in order, as he said, to predispose her to peace. To the Brabanters and Flemings he granted an armistice, but seemed about to send forces thither as if for the restoration of unlimited power. Meanwhile Sweden and Turkey continued the unequal fight against Russia, and the Triple Alliance imposed prudence on Denmark. In this uneasy equipoise England offered her mediation, not only to the belligerents —Russia, Austria, Turkey, and Sweden—but also to Prussia, with a view to a general armistice for the discussion of a settlement.[3]

Nowhere did this proposal meet with a cooler reception than at Berlin. Accordingly, on 21st May, Pitt and Leeds justified their conduct in a despatch to Ewart, in which the hand of the Prime Minister is plainly visible. He declared his earnest desire for the joint intervention of the three Allies, but explained that it was possible only by adhering to "that system of moderation to which he [His Majesty] has uniformly endeavoured to adhere."

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[1] Dembinski, i, 279.

[2] "F. O.," Austria, 19. Keith to Leeds, 10th May

[3] Hertzberg, "Recueil," iii, 58.

England desired to see the power of Sweden and Turkey maintained, and would secretly advance a subsidy to Gustavus, but did not feel justified in going to war with the two Empires. If Prussia drew the sword, England would not only keep France and Denmark quiet, but would also prevent the march of Austrian troops to the Netherlands during the armistice there. The earnest hope was expressed that Prussia would give up the Galician project, and limit her gains to the restoration of the former boundaries, with a few reasonable changes. Nothing was further from the wish of England than to sacrifice the interests of Prussia to those of Austria.[1]

It soon appeared that Pitt and Leeds were prepared to meet the Court of Berlin half way. On receiving the curt refusal of Catharine to the British offer of mediation, they admitted that the Prussian plan of exchanges of territory was not objectionable in itself, if Austria agreed to it—a large assumption. The arrangement might be that Russia should retain the Crimea and all her present conquests up to the Dniester, that is, inclusive of Oczakoff. In that case she must restore to Sweden the wider Finnish limits of the Peace of Nystadt. As for Austria, she should gain North Servia and West Wallachia as far as the River Aluta—the Passarowitz limits; and she ought to retain the whole of Galicia except the districts about Brody, Belez, and Cracow. As a reward for these services to Poland, Prussia would gain her heart's desire—Danzig, Thorn, and the Wartha territory. These would be "not sacrifices, but exchanges of territory."[2]

The British Cabinet would clearly have preferred the *status quo*; but in this alternative scheme it sketched arrangements highly favourable to Prussia, Austria, Russia, and Sweden, less so to Poland, but wholly unfavourable to the Turks. Certainly it corresponded more nearly to the actual or probable fortune of war, the prospects of the Moslems being at this time gloomy, those of the Swedes doubtful, but those of Prussia brilliant. The Sultan, it was hinted, might be soothed by the guarantee of his possessions and the hope of admission to the Triple Alliance along with Sweden and Poland.[1] This curious despatch shows that Pitt and Leeds cared little about Turkey, and that their adhesion to the *status quo* was conditioned by a politic opportunism.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 17. Leeds to Ewart, 21st May. Gustavus had pressed Prussia to advance to him 8,000,000 Swedish crowns, and 7,000,000 more next year if the war continued. He urged her to attack Russia at once. Sweden must obtain the wider boundaries of the Peace of Nystadt (Ewart to Leeds, 10th May). Early in June Prussia advanced 100,000 as a subsidy to Sweden, and as many more on behalf of England, on condition that *Gustavus would not make a separate peace with Russia* (Ewart to Leeds, 4th June).

[2] "F. O.," Austria, 20. Leeds to Keith, 23rd May ("Secret and Confidential"). Frederick William's plan of exchanges drawn up on 12th May was curiously similar (see Dembinski, i, 303, 305).

A sudden and perplexing change now came over Hapsburg policy. Possibly Leopold relied on the wheedling assurances of support received from Catharine. Certain it is that in the middle of June he demanded "indemnities" for the proposed gains to Poland and Prussia; and his haughty tone was not lowered by the news of a sharp defeat inflicted by the Turkish garrison of Giurgevo on the Austrian besiegers. Bared to the waist, and armed with sword and dagger, they suddenly burst from the gates in three uncontrollable torrents, which swept the Imperialists out of trenches and camp, and far on to the plain. In vain also did Keith warn Cobenzl not to rely on Russia. The Hapsburgs now seemed bent on dismembering Turkey and defying their northern neighbours.[2] At the end of June Leopold declared his resolve not to treat with the rebels in the Netherlands, and to denounce the armistice with them. Probably this threatening tone was a screen to hide the weakness of Austria's position. On all sides her enemies held her fast. The Hungarians and Flemings firmly demanded their ancient rights; and persistence in the game of bluff must have led to the break up of her dominions.

Another curious change also came over the scene on the arrival of news at Berlin that Potemkin had offered to restore to the Porte all the Russian conquests of the present war, on condition of peace. This sudden adoption of the *rôle* of peacemaker by that ambitious and masterful favourite has never been fully explained.[3] It may have been due either to Turkish bribes or to a crafty resolve to checkmate Hertzberg's scheme of making Turkey pay for Prussia's gains. For how could the professed friend and ally impose on the Porte sacrifices far greater than those demanded by the enemy? The report that Leopold was disposed to accept the *status quo*, finding it far less objectionable than Hertzberg's plan of exchanges, also gave food for thought. Accordingly, Frederick William, before opening negotiations with Austria, decided that this should form the general basis, but with certain modifications. The Turks were to be warned that, as Prussia's armaments had saved them from destruction, they would now do well to conclude an armistice with Austria and hope for admission to the Triple Alliance. They should also humour their preserver by giving up Western Wallachia to Austria, so that she in her turn might cede the outer districts of Galicia to the Poles, who of course would yield to Prussia her reward for these troublesome bargainings. As for Great Britain, she was expected to favour these scientific readjustments because the trade of the Vistula would then be freed from obstacles, and be opened to her by favourable commercial treaties. Such was Hertzberg's final plan for the preservation of the *status quo*.[1] In order to secure the acquiescence of the Turks, he had long kept the Porte on tenter-hooks by delaying the ratification of Dietz's treaty, and by ordering the recall of that masterful envoy. On the other hand, the Turks were left with a glimmer of hope of eventual assistance from Berlin.

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 20. Leeds to Keith, 8th June.

[2] *Ibid.* Keith to Leeds, 16th, 19th, 20th, and 30th June.

In face of these facts I reject the account given by Kaunitz on 24th July 1790 (in Vivenot, "Kaiserpolitik Oesterreich's") that Austria had consistently sought to treat at Reichenbach on the English basis of the *status quo.*

[3] Pitt and Leeds thought it a device to evade England's offer of mediation (Leeds to Ewart, 25th June).

Accordingly, Prussian policy seemed about to win a brilliant triumph at the proposed Conference of Reichenbach, where the Triple Alliance and Austria (Russia having refused Britain's mediation) were to thrash out these questions; and nothing is more curious than to watch the collapse of Hertzberg's ingenious web. In order at the outset to settle matters separately with the Austrian envoy, Spielmann, the King of Prussia held Ewart aloof because the British Ambassador consistently warned Hertzberg against the complicated exchanges projected by him. Thereupon Ewart drew up a Memorial insisting that England must be a principal party, and that, as both Austria and Prussia had promised to admit the *status quo* as the basis of negotiation, the latter could not make war on the former if she consented to it. In that case, or even if he (Ewart) were excluded from the Conference, Great Britain must cancel her engagements to Prussia. He further declared his conviction that Austria would retract her extreme claims and listen to reason.[1]

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 18. Ewart to Leeds, 11th June. He encloses a copy of the Prussian despatch of 5th May from Constantinople, sent by Knobelsdorff. (See also Hertzberg's "Recueil," iii, 76-8.)

This sharp protest had some effect on Hertzberg; but the chief difficulty was now with Frederick William. At the head of his splendid army, he seemed to court war. He sent a courier to the Porte to ratify Dietz's treaty; and he cut off all communications with Austria as though hostilities had begun. At the first three sessions of the Conference (27th-29th June) the Austrian and Prussian envoys indulged in eager but vague wrangling; but the arrival of news from Constantinople that the Turks would never concede the Prussian demands sufficed to depress the bellicose ardour of the monarch. As there was a serious risk of the Porte coming to terms with Russia and Austria, he now harked back towards the *status quo*. This move, which the Duke of Brunswick and Möllendorf heartily supported, gathered strength when it appeared that Poland would accept none of Hertzberg's benefits The arrival of the British note of 2nd July to the same general effect ended the last efforts of Frederick William for Danzig and Thorn.[2] He now gave Hertzberg written orders to abandon at once the whole scheme of exchanges "since it could only serve to commit him with Great Britain as well as with the Porte and Poland." Whence it appears that Hertzberg's scientific and philanthropic plans fell through simply because all the States concerned utterly repudiated them.

The renunciation, however, was made not unskilfully. The Prussian and British Ministers were careful to keep secret Hertzberg's change of front and thus prepared a surprise for Spielmann. That envoy having put forward some equally untenable schemes of aggrandisement, Ewart rose and read out a Memorial, drawn up in concert with his Prussian and Dutch colleagues, demanding an exact restitution of the old boundaries. In vain did the Hapsburg Minister seek to wriggle out of the dilemma by betraying Prussia into glaring inconsistency. Prussia stood firm; and finally he reduced his demands to Orsova and district. Even this cold comfort was denied him.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 18. Ewart to Leeds, 27th June.

[2] Ranke, "Fürstenbund," ii, 376-85; Dembinski, 82-4, 314; "Bland Burges P." 142-4.

The Triple Alliance was inexorable. Thereupon he demanded the dissolution of Prussia's compacts with Turkey and Sweden, only to meet with the reply that the Austro-Russian alliance must first be annulled.[1] Thus Hertzberg, even in the hour of personal defeat, brought down the Hapsburg schemes in utter collapse; and the result of the discussions at Reichenbach was the recurrence to the *status quo*—the very same arrangement which Pitt and Leeds had throughout declared to be the best of all solutions.

Hertzberg's annoyance at the destruction of his pet plans must have diminished when he heard from Vienna that Austria had secretly empowered Potemkin to make her peace with the Turks on that same basis. If this be true, each of the rivals was playing a game of bluff at Reichenbach; and the sight of the two Ancient Pistols eating the leek in turn must have filled Ewart with a joy such as falls to few diplomatists. Even as regards the Belgians, the British suggestion held good. They were to regain their ancient constitution together with an amnesty for past offences, and a guarantee by the three Allied Powers.[2] Frederick William, in complimenting Hertzberg on the end of the negotiations at Reichenbach, added that they must now assure themselves, through Ewart, of England's support in imposing the *status quo* on Russia.[3] A new chapter in the relations of the Powers and in the career of Pitt lay enfolded in this suggestion.

Shortly after this happy ending to the disputes in Central Europe came the news of a settlement of the war in the Baltic. Once again Gustavus III startled the world. After his sudden and furious attack on Catharine, and her no less fierce counter stroke, it seemed that the struggle must be mortal. But many circumstances occurred to allay their hatred. The aims of the Czarina had always trended southwards; and the war in Finland was ultimately regarded chiefly as an annoying diversion from the crusade against the Turks. Moreover the valour of the Swedes, who closed the doubtful campaign of 1790 with a decided success at sea, added to the difficulties of campaigning in Finland, left little hope of conquest in that quarter so long as the Triple Alliance kept the Danes quiet and subsidized Gustavus. Catharine was in fact fighting against the forces of nature and the resources of England, Prussia, and Holland. Gustavus, too, even in the year 1789 felt the sobering influences of poverty. In 1790 they threatened him with bankruptcy, and at that same time the outlook was far from bright in Finland. Fortunately, the Russians were not in a position to press Gustavus hard. But nothing could stave off the advent of bankruptcy unless the Allies promptly advanced a considerable sum. This they were not prepared to do, for his unceasing importunities had wearied them out. The Dutch declined to help in a matter which concerned them but little, and after long negotiations at Stockholm Great Britain and Prussia agreed on 31st July to advance £200,000, or only two-thirds of the minimum named by the King. By the month of August 1790 the treasury at Stockholm was absolutely empty, so our envoy, Liston, reported.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 18. Ewart to Leeds, 16th July. See too Vivenot, 5.

[2] For the protest of the Belgian Congress against the Reichenbach compromise, which dashed their hopes of independence, see Van der Spiegel, "Négociations . . . des Pays Bas autrichiens," 303-6.

[3] Ranke, "Fürstenbund," ii, 387.

While Gustavus was chafing at the restraints of poverty, Catharine held out to him alluring hopes. So soon as she heard of the turn which affairs were taking at Reichenbach she resolved to end her quarrel with him in order the better to browbeat Prussia and England. Leopold had early informed her of his resolve to conclude the Turkish war, in accordance with the demands of the Allies; and he also warned her of their intention to deprive Russia of her chief conquest. With a quickness of insight and a magnanimous resolve instinct with the highest statesmanship, she resolved to end the war in the Baltic by offers which would appeal irresistibly to a knight-errant struggling with debts and worries. She therefore despatched a courier to him in Finland, holding out virtually the same terms which the Allies had guaranteed to him.

Gustavus did not long hesitate. It is true that he had the promise of seventeen British battleships, which were in the Downs ready to sail to his succour; Prussia also had already sent one half of the subsidy which he demanded; and he had pledged his troth to the Allies not to make a separate peace with Russia. That step, however, he now decided to take; and the impression afterwards prevailed at London and Berlin, that Russian money had some influence on his decision.[1] However that may be, he sent Baron Armfelt to treat for peace. Where both sides were bent on a speedy settlement, difficulties vanished; and thus on 14th August 1790, the Peace of Werela was signed. It restored the few gains of territory which the belligerents had made, and gave permission to the Swedes to buy grain in Russian ports. The treaty was remarkable chiefly for its omissions. No mention was made of previous Russo-Swedish treaties, which gave the Empire some right to interfere in Swedish affairs. As Liston pointed out, the absence of any such claim was a personal victory for Gustavus; for it increased his authority and depressed that of the Russophile nobles. The King at once asserted his prerogative by condemning to death, despite the entreaties of Liston, the ringleader of the mutiny in Finland and by incarcerating two others for life.[1] Events were to show that the faction was cowed but not wholly crushed. The bullet of Ankerstrom repaid the debt of vengeance stored up in September 1790.

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[1] On 7th September Bland Burges wrote to Lord Auckland that Russia had paid heavily for the Swedish peace (B.M. Add. MSS., 34433).

Equally strange was the abandonment of the Turks by their headstrong ally. Gustavus had gone to war ostensibly in order to prevent their overthrow, and now he left them at the mercy of Catharine. It is true that the signature of the Reichenbach Convention three weeks earlier ended their conflict with Austria; but the indignation of the Sultan, the wrath of the King of Prussia, and the quiet contempt of Pitt manifested the general feeling of the time.[2] Gustavus had salved his conscience by requiring Catharine to accord lenient treatment to the Moslems. The Czarina was quite ready to make any promises to this effect, if they formed no part of the treaty with Sweden. She assured Gustavus of her desire to renew the Treaty of Kainardji rather than continue the war; and Gustavus decided, so he informed Liston, "to trust to the elevated and honourable character of the Empress" on this point. Liston had his doubts. He ventured to express his surprise at the generosity of the imperial promises, which implied the restoration of the Crimea to Turkey, and he remarked that the combined pressure of Great Britain and Prussia had not availed to extort so great a boon. Gustavus, however, persisted in his estimate of the character of Catharine, doubtless because she humoured his latest plan, a crusade to Paris on behalf of the French monarchy, while she further promised him the sum of 2,000,000 roubles for his immediate needs.[1] She, too, sang loudly the praises of the man whom she had sworn to ruin. The cause of this new-born enthusiasm will appear in due course.

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[1] "F. O.," Sweden, 11. Liston to Leeds, 17th and 24th August, 3rd, 7th, and 10th September.

[2] *Ibid.* Liston to Leeds, 23rd November; Dembinski, i, 84.

From the Swedish point of view much might be said for the action of Gustavus. He had rid himself and his land from the irksome tutelage of Russia: he came out of the war with no loss of territory, the first Russo-Swedish war of the century of which this can be said; his martial energy had inspirited his people; and he had overthrown a corrupt and unpatriotic aristocracy. But, from the standpoint which he took up at the outset of the war, his conduct had proved him a shifty ally, who merited the suspicion of his former comrades. Nevertheless he had played no small part in checking the subversive schemes of Catharine and Joseph. Thanks to him the Moslems maintained a struggle which gave time for the army of Prussia and the diplomacy of Pitt to exert themselves with effect. Had he stood by his promises, the Triple Alliance would probably have brought Russia to terms favourable to the interests both of Turkey and of Poland.

Even as matters stood at the end of that year of turmoil, 1790, Pitt might reflect with something of pride that his efforts had decisively made for peace and stability. He it was who had been mainly instrumental in saving Sweden from ruin, the Hapsburg States from partition, and Prussia from Hertzberg's policy of exchange and adventure. Moreover, at that same time British policy won another success at a point which has always been deemed essential to the maintenance of equilibrium in Europe.

The recovery of his authority in the Belgic provinces lay near the heart of Leopold II. His letters and those of Kaunitz show that he consented to patch matters up at Reichenbach largely in order that he might be free to subdue Brabant and Flanders. True, he admitted the mediation of the Triple Alliance in those affairs; but his missive to Catharine shows that he acquiesced in that convention only in order to prevent the disruption of his dominions, and that he hoped to evade some at least of its provisions by means of an "eternal alliance" with Russia. As will appear in a later chapter, fidelity to

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[1] "F. O.," Sweden, 11. Liston to Leeds, 23rd November 1790.

Russia involved a policy of procrastination and trickery towards Turkey, Prussia, England, and the Belgians. The conduct of Austria in the Eastern Question helped to checkmate Pitt and secure a diplomatic triumph for Catharine in the year 1791.

Here we may notice that Leopold and Kaunitz, so soon as the threat of war from the Prussian side passed away, and their own troops in Luxemburg were reinforced, took a stern tone with the men of Brabant and Flanders. At the Conference held at The Hague for the settlement of those affairs, the Austrian envoy, Count Mercy, refused to extend the time of the armistice in those provinces, and warned the three mediating Powers that their services would no longer be recognized by the Viennese Court. Austrian troops also began to march towards Brussels. Thereupon Lord Auckland hotly protested against this high-handed proceeding; and the British Cabinet threatened to send a large fleet to co-operate with the Prussians and Dutch in preventing the re-conquest of Belgic lands by Leopold.[1] This threat, formidable in view of the large armament kept up by England, even after the end of the Spanish dispute, emanated largely from Pitt himself. For Ewart, who was then in London on furlough, wrote to Auckland on 28th November 1790 concerning the opinions of Ministers:

> Some difference of opinion existed; but I trust Mr. Pitt will write to your lordship himself in a satisfactory manner; and you know better than I do of what consequence the opinions of others are. I confess I am very uneasy about the explosion this affair must have produced at Berlin; but I trust the explanations sent from hence will have given satisfaction both there and with you on the great principle of making the Emperor adhere—*bon gré, mal gré*—to his engagements for re-establishing the [Belgic] Constitution: and it appears impossible he should venture in his present situation to risk the consequences of a refusal.[2]

Pitt's firmness won the day. Leopold shrank from a contest with the Allies, and consented to a convention which was signed on 10th December at The Hague. The ancient customs and privileges of the Pays Bas were to be restored (including those of the University of Louvain and the Catholic seminaries), and an amnesty granted to all concerned in the recent revolt. Leopold promised never to apply the conscription to his Belgian subjects, and he recognized the guarantee of Great Britain, Prussia, and Holland for the present arrangements.

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[1] Vivenot, 9, 10, 39-52; Hertzberg, "Recueil," iii, 175-83; also 111-74 for correspondence on the Bishopric of Liége.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 34435.

The satisfaction of Pitt at this turn of affairs appeared in the order to place the British navy on a peace footing—a measure which we can now see to have been premature, in that it encouraged Catharine to reject the demands of the Allies, and Leopold to display the duplicity which often marred his actions. The failure of Pitt to coerce the Czarina will engage our attention later; but we may note here that, on various pretexts, Leopold refused to ratify the Hague Convention, and left Belgian affairs in a state which earned the hatred of that people and the suspicion of British statesmen.[1]

For the present, as the shiftiness of Leopold and the defiance of Catharine could not be surmised, there seemed to be scarcely a cloud on the political horizon. By the end of the year 1790, the policy of Pitt, cautious at the beginning of a crisis, firm during its growth, and drastic at the climax, had raised Great Britain to a state of prosperity and power which contrasted sharply with the unending turmoil in France, the helplessness of Spain, the confusion in the Hapsburg States, and the sharp financial strain in Russia. In truth, the end of the year 1790 marks the zenith of Pitt's career. In seven years, crowded with complex questions, he had won his way to an eminence whence he could look down on rivals, both internal and external, groping their way doubtfully and deviously.

Of these triumphs, those gained over foreign Powers were by far the most important, except in the eyes of those who look at British history from the point of view of party strife. To them the events of this fascinating period will be merely a confused background to the duel between Pitt and Fox. Those, however, who love to probe the very heart of events, and to pry into the hidden springs of great movements, which uplift one nation and depress another, will not soon tire even of the dry details of diplomacy, when they are seen to be the gauge of human wisdom and folly, of national greatness and decline.

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[1] On 26th July 1791 Grenville, then Foreign Minister, wrote to Ewart that he hoped the sad straits of the Royal Family at Paris would induce Leopold to ratify the Hague Convention, and that the Allies must settle the Belgian constitution in such a way as to satisfy the rights of the sovereign and the just demands of that people (B.M. Add. MSS., 34438). See, too, Sybel, bk. ii, ch. vi.

In the seven years now under survey, England emerged from defeat, isolation, and discredit which bordered on bankruptcy, until she soared aloft to a position of prestige in the diplomatic and mercantile spheres which earned the envy of her formerly triumphant rivals. Strong in herself, and strengthened by the alliance of Prussia and Holland, she had to all appearance assured the future of the Continent in a way that made for peace and quietness. Pitt had helped to compose the strifes resulting from the reckless innovations of Joseph II, strifes which, had Hertzberg succeeded, must have led to a general war. The importance of this work of pacification has escaped notice amidst the dramatic incidents of the Revolution and Napoleonic Era. For in the panorama of history, as in its daily diorama, it is the destructive and sensational which rivets attention, too often to the exclusion of the healing and upbuilding efforts on which the future of the race depends. A more searching inquiry, a more faithful description, will reveal the truth, that a statesman attains a higher success when he averts war than when he wages a triumphant war.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

A disposition to preserve, and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman. Everything else is vulgar in the conception, perilous in the execution.—BURKE, *Reflections on the French Revolution.*

Ideas rule the world and its events. A Revolution is the passage of an idea from theory to practice.—MAZZINI, *The French Revolution of* 1789.

THAT the career of Pitt is divided into two very diverse portions by the French Revolution is almost a commonplace. Macaulay in artful antitheses has pointed the contrast between the earlier and the later Pitt; poets, who lacked his art but abounded in gall, descanted on the perversion of the friend of liberty into the reactionary tyrant; and Jacobins hissed out his name as that of " the enemy of the human race."

If we carefully study the attitude of Pitt towards the French Revolution, we shall find it to be far from inflexible. It changed with changing events. It was not that of a doctrinaire but of a practical statesman, who judges things by their outcome. He has often been blamed for looking at this great movement too much from the standpoint of a financier; and the charge is perhaps tenable as regards the years of the Jacobin ascendancy, when the flame kindled by Rousseau shrivelled up the old order of things. But the ideas prevalent in 1793 differed utterly from those of 1789, which aimed at reforms of a markedly practical character.

There was urgent need of them. As is well known, the unprivileged classes of France were entangled in a network of abuses, social, fiscal, and agrarian, from which the nobles had refused to set them free. Despite the goodwill of Louis XVI, the well-meant efforts of his chief minister, Necker, and the benevolent attempts of many of the clergy and some nobles, the meshes of Feudalism and the absolute monarchy lay heavily on the land up to the time of the Assembly of the States-

General at Versailles in May 1789. It is of course a gross error to assume that the French peasants were more oppressed than those of other continental lands. Their lot was more favoured than that of the peasantry of Spain, South Italy, Prussia, and most parts of Germany, to say nothing of the brutish condition of the serfs of Poland and Russia.[1] Those of France were more prosperous than Arthur Young believed them to be. They kept on buying up plot after plot in ways that illustrate the ceaseless land-hunger of the Celt and his elusive stubbornness.

But he would be a shallow reasoner who argued that, because the poverty of the French peasants was less grinding than it appeared, therefore the old agrarian and fiscal customs were tolerable. The most brilliant display of what Carlyle called "tongue-fencing" cannot justify a system which compels millions of men to live behind a perpetual screen of misery. To notice the case of that worthy peasant whose hospitality was sought by Rousseau during his first weary tramp to Paris. The man gave him only the coarsest food until he felt sure of his being a friend of the people and no spy. Then wine, ham, and an omelette were forthcoming, and Jacques Bonhomme opened his heart. "He gave me to understand," said Rousseau, "that he hid his wine on account of the duties, and his bread on account of the tax; and that he would be a lost man if he did not lead people to suppose that he was dying of hunger. All that he told me about this subject—of which previously I had not had the slightest idea—made an impression upon me which will never be effaced. There was the germ of that inextinguishable hatred which developed later in my heart against the vexations endured by the poor, and against their oppressors."[1] Multiply the case of that hospitable peasant a million times over, and the outbreak of the Revolution becomes a foregone conclusion. The only surprising thing is that the *débâcle* did not come far earlier.

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[1] It is too large a topic to discuss here why the Revolution did not break out in those lands; but I may hazard these suggestions: (1) Feudalism was there still a reality. The lords mostly lived on their estates, spent their money there, and performed the duties which the French nobles delegated to bailiffs, while they themselves squandered the proceeds at Paris or Versailles. Hence (2) a perilous concentration of wealth at those centres, which attracted thither the miserable, especially in times of distress like the severe winter of 1787-8. (3) In the other lands named above, the barriers of princely and feudal rule kept the people isolated in small States or domains and prevented common action. (4) Political and social speculations were brought home to the French as to no other people by the return of the French troops serving in the United States. (5) The mistakes of Louis XVI and Necker in May—June 1789, and the precipitation of the reformers at Versailles caused a rupture which was by no means inevitable, and which few if any had expected.

But the old order rarely breaks up until the vernal impulses of hope begin potently to work. These forces were set in motion, firstly, by the speculations of philosophers, the criticisms of economists and the social millennium glowingly sketched by Rousseau. Ideas which might have been confined to the study, were spread to the street by the French soldiers who had fought side by side with the soldiers of Washington, and became on their return the most telling pleaders for reform. Thus, by a fatal ricochet, the bolt launched by the Bourbons at England's Colonial Empire, glanced off and wrecked their own fabric.

The results, however, came slowly. It is often assumed that the destructive teachings of the Encyclopaedists, the blighting raillery of Voltaire, and the alluring Utopia of Rousseau would by themselves have been the ruin of that outworn social order. But it is certain that no one in France or England, up to the eve of the Revolution, anticipated a general overturn. Ultimately, no doubt, ideas rule the world; but their advent to power is gradual, unless the champions of the old order allow decay to spread. Furthermore, constructors of ingenious theories about the French Revolution generally forget that nearly all the ideas given to the world by Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, were derived from the works of Hobbes, Locke, and Bolingbroke. The sage of Ferney drew his arrows from the quiver of English philosophy, and merely added the barbs of his own satire; Montesquieu pleaded on behalf of a balance of political powers like that of England; and all that was most effective in the "Social Contract" of the Genevese thinker came from Hobbes and Locke. The *verve* of Frenchmen gave to these ideas an application far wider than that which they had gained in their island home. Here the teachings of Locke formed a prim parterre around the palace of the King, the heir to the glorious Revolution of 1688. When transferred to that political forcing-bed, France, they shot up in baleful harvests.

It is the seed-bed which counts as well as the seed. The harmlessness of philosophic speculation in England and its destructive activity in France may be explained ultimately by the condition of the two lands. In the Island State able Ministers succeeded in popularizing an alien dynasty and promoting the well-being of the people. Retrenchment and Reform were not merely topics of conversation in *salons*; they were carried out in many parts of the administration. This was specially the case after the peace of 1783, which left France victorious and England prostrate. There the fruits of victory were not garnered; and the political fabric, strained by the war, was not underpinned. Thinking men talked of repair, but, thanks to the weakness of the King and the favouritism of the Queen, nothing was done. Here the ablest constructive statesman since the time of Cromwell set about the needed repairs; and his work, be it remembered, coincided with the joyous experiments of the Court of Versailles to maintain credit by a display of luxury. The steady recovery of England and the swift decline of France may be ascribed in large measure to Pitt and Calonne.

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[1] Rousseau, "Confessions," bk. iv.

It was against definite and curable ills in the body politic that the French reformers at first directed their efforts. In May—June 1789 the ideals of Rousseau remained wholly in the background. The Nobles and Clergy (as appears in their *cahiers*, or instructions) were, with few exceptions, ready to give up the immunities from taxation to which they had too long clung. Those of the Tiers Etat, or Commons, laid stress on fair taxation, on the abolition of the cramping customs of Feudalism, whether social, agrarian, or judicial, on the mitigation of service in the militia, while some even demanded better lighting of the streets. The Nobles and Clergy asked for a limitation of the powers of the Crown; and the Commons desired a constitution; but it was to resemble that of England, save that larger powers were left to the King, the Ministers being responsible to him alone. Few of the *cahiers* of the Commons asked for a fusion of the three Orders in one Assembly; and not one breathed the thought of a Republic.[1] Their bugbear was the game laws, not the monarchy; the *taille à miséricorde* and the *corvées*, not the Nobles; the burdensome tithes, not the Church.

As at Paris and Versailles, so among the peasants. At first, even in troublous Franche Comté, their thoughts did not soar beyond taxes and feudal burdens. Arthur Young calmed a demonstration against himself by telling excited patriots near Besançon of the differences between taxes in England and France:

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[1] Prof. Aulard ("La Rév. Franç.," chs. iv-vi) has proved that there was no republican party in France until December 1790, and that it had no importance until the flight of the King to Varennes at Midsummer 1791.

> Gentlemen [he said] we have a great number of taxes in England which you know nothing of in France; but the *tiers état*, the poor, do not pay them, they are laid on the rich; every window in a man's house pays; but if he has no more than six windows, he pays nothing; a Seigneur, with a great estate, pays the *vingtièmes* and *taille*, but the little proprietor of a garden pays nothing; the rich, for their horses, their carriages, their servants, and even for liberty to kill their own partridges; but the poor farmer nothing of all this; and what is more, we have in England a tax paid by the rich for the relief of the poor.[1]

Who would not sympathize with these people! They were staggering under burdens piled up by a monarchy absolute in name, but powerless in all that made for reform and retrenchment. Where Louis XVI by his weakness, and the Queen by her caprice, had failed to right the wrong, the nation was bent in succeeding; and it is highly probable that, if the King had shown more tact in dealing with the Commons, and they a little more patience, the popular movement might have progressed peacefully for a decade, with wholly beneficent results. We, who know how one event led on to another, find it difficult to escape from the attractive but fallacious conclusion that the sequence was inevitable. The mind loves to forge connecting links, and then to conclude that the chain could not have been made otherwise—a quite gratuitous assumption. At several points it was the exceptional which happened. A perusal of the letters of intelligent onlookers shows that they foresaw, and most naturally, a wholly different outcome of events. They looked to see a few drastic reforms, a time of unrest, and then the remodelling of the monarchy *à l'Anglaise*.

As for Pitt, he waited to see whither all this would tend. His attitude towards France in the early part of 1789 was distinctly friendly. He assured the French ambassador, M. de Luzerne, that France and England had the same principles, namely, not to aggrandize themselves and to oppose aggrandizement in others, and he added that he hoped for the assistance of France to assist Sweden and Turkey against the powerful Empires that were seeking their overthrow.

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[1] A. Young, "Travels in France," 213 [Bohn edit.].

This declaration bespoke his fixed resolve to save Europe from the ambitious schemes of the other monarchs; and, now that France accepted Anglo-Prussian ascendancy in Holland and abandoned her forward policy in the Orient, she might serve to redress the balance of power. Such views were consonant with Pitt's lofty aim of winning over "the natural enemy." In truth, they were the outcome of common sense, even of self-interest. The suspicion and dislike were all on the side of the Court of Versailles. Montmorin and Luzerne were haunted by the fear that Pitt meant to pour oil on the smouldering discontent in France, and shrivel up the Bourbon power. There is not a shred of evidence that he ever entertained these notions. That they were harboured at Versailles merely showed that a Power which has rent another in twain cannot believe in the goodwill of the injured nation; and this suspicion was one of the many causes begetting irritation and alarm in Paris. On the other hand it must be remembered, as one of Pitt's greatest services, that his protests against the American War and his subsequent efforts for an *entente cordiale* with France, had so far effaced resentment on this side of the Channel, that the strivings of Frenchmen after political freedom and social equality aroused the deepest interest. The majority of our people sympathized with Fox, when, on hearing of the fall of the Bastille, he exclaimed: "How much is this the greatest and best event that has happened in the world."[1]

Official prudence or natural reserve kept Pitt silent on these affairs, and on the horrors of the ensuing Jacquerie, which speedily cooled the first transports of Britons. We know, however, that he must have viewed the financial collapse of France with secret satisfaction; for in August—September 1788 he wrote to Grenville in terms which implied that the recovery of the credit of France, then expected under the fostering care of Necker, would be a very serious blow, implying as it did the resumption of her aggressive schemes in the East.[2] Now, however, the disorders in France aroused his pity; and on 14th July, before he can have heard of the fall of the Bastille, he wrote to his mother that France was fast becoming "an object of compassion even to a rival."[1] There is no sign that he feared the spread of democratic opinions into England. The monarchy had never been so popular as since the mental malady of the King. On the whole, then, Pitt surveyed the first events of the Revolution from the standpoint of a diplomatist and financier. France seemed to him doomed to a time of chastening and weakness which might upset the uneasy equilibrium of Europe.

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[1] "Mems. of Fox," ii, 361.

[2] "Dropmore P.," i, 353-5.

Already he had come into touch with the French people at a very sensitive point, and in a way which illustrated their eager expectancy and his cool and calculating character. On 25th June Necker sent to him an urgent appeal begging that he would sanction the export of flour from Great Britain to France in order to make good the scarcity which there prevailed. If the request must come before Parliament, he trusted that the boon would speedily be granted by a generous nation, and by a statesman "whose rare virtues, sublime talents, and superb renown have long rivetted my admiration and that of all Europe."[2]

In sharp contrast to this personal and effusive request was the cold and correct demeanour of Pitt. He sent the following formal reply, not to Necker, but to the French ambassador, the Marquis de Luzerne:

> Downing Street, *3rd July*, 1789.[3]
>
> Mr. Pitt presents his compliments to the Marquis de Luzerne. He has felt the strongest desire to be able to recommend sending the supply of flour desir'd by Mons^r^ Necker and had hopes from the information at first given him by Mr. Wilson that it would be practicable; but, having afterwards received some contrary information, he thought it necessary that the subject should be examined by the Committee of Council for the Affairs of Trade, whose enquiry was not clos'd till this morning. Mr. Pitt has now the mortification to find that, according to the accounts of the persons most conversant with the corn trade, the present supply in this country compar'd with the demand, and the precarious prospect of the harvest render it impossible to propose to Parliament to authorize any exportation.

Three days later Pulteney brought the matter before the House of Commons and deprecated the export of 20,000 sacks of flour to France which had been talked of. Pitt thereupon stated that skilled advice was being taken as to the advisability of allowing such an export, in view of the shortness at home, and the gloomy prospects for the harvest. Wilberforce, Dempster, and Major Scott urged the more generous course towards our suffering neighbours; but others pointed out that, as the price of home wheat was rising (it rose with phenomenal rapidity on that very day), any such proposal would enhance that perilous tendency at home without materially benefiting the French. Even at the present figures export was forbidden under the existing Corn Law; but Pitt mentioned that a curious attempt was on foot at Shoreham to depress the price from forty-eight shillings to forty-four in order to procure the export of 8,000 sacks of flour to Havre. As the transaction was clearly fictitious, he had directed the Customs officers to stop the export. On 13th July Grenville, in the absence of Pitt, asked leave to introduce a Bill for the better ascertaining and regulating the export of corn; and the House at once agreed.[1]

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[1] Stanhope, ii, 38.

[2] Pitt MSS., 163.

[3] *Ibid.* 102.

Such, then, was the beginning of Pitt's relations to French democracy. They are certainly to be regretted. His reply to Necker's request is icily correct and patriotically insular; and his whole attitude was a warning to the French not to expect from him any deviation from the rules of Political Economy. Of course it is unfair to tax him with blindness in not recognizing the momentous character of the crisis. No one could foresee the banishment of Necker, the surrender of the Bastille, on the very day after Grenville's motion, still less the stories of the *pacte de famine*, and their hideous finale, the march of the *dames des halles* to Versailles, ostensibly to get food. Nevertheless, the highest statesmanship transcends mere reason. The greatest of leaders knows instinctively when economic laws and the needs of his own nation may be set aside for the welfare of humanity. The gift of 20,000 sacks of flour outright would have been the best bargain of Pitt's career. It would have spoken straight to the heart of France, and brought about a genuine *entente cordiale*. His conduct was absolutely justified by law. The Commercial Treaty of 1786 with France had not included the trade in corn or flour, which had long been subject to strict regulations, and therefore remained so. Moreover, the Dublin Government did not allow the export of wheat to Great Britain when home wheat sold at more than thirty shillings the barrel;

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 226-31. For the tricks used in order to get corn exported to France, see "Auckland Journals," ii, 367.

and in that year of scarcity, 1789, when the harvest was extremely late, and the yield uncertain even at the beginning of December, the suggestion came from Dublin Castle that wheat was not at present available so as to relieve the scarcity in England.[1] If that was the case between the sister kingdoms, Pitt certainly acted correctly in forbidding the export of flour to France.

Meanwhile, Anglo-French relations were decidedly cool. The Duke of Dorset, our ambassador at Paris, reported that it was not desirable for English visitors to appear in the streets amid the excitements that followed on the fall of the Bastille; and an agent, named Hippisley, employed by him, reported that "the prejudices against the English were very general—the pretext taken being our refusal to aid the French with grain, and our reception of M. Calonne, which, they contended, was in deference to the Polignacs."[2] The Duke of Dorset also referred to the prevalence of wild rumours as to our efforts to destroy the French ships and dockyard at Brest, and to foment disorders in France.[3]

Certainly we were not fortunate in our ambassador. In the year 1786 the Duke of Dorset had often shown petty touchiness in his relations with William Eden, besides jealously curbing the superior abilities of his own subordinate, Daniel Hailes. Now that they were gone, his despatches were thin and lacking in balance. After the fall of the Bastille, he wrote to the Duke of Leeds that "the greatest Revolution that we know of has been effected with, comparatively speaking, . . . the loss of very few lives. From this moment we may consider France as a free country, the King as a very limited monarch, and the nobility as reduced to a level with the rest of the nation." He described the tactful visit of Louis XVI to Paris on 17th July as the most humiliating step he could possibly take. "He was actually led in triumph like a tame bear by the deputies and the city militia." He added, with an unusual flash of insight, that the people had not been led by any man or party, "but merely by the general diffusion of reason and philosophy."

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 549, 550; "Corresp. of W. A. Miles," i, 739.

[2] "F. O.," France, 32. Mem. by Hippisley, 31st July 1789. Calonne for some time resided at Wimbledon House. He was received, though very coolly, at Court.

[3] They were set forth in much detail in Paris newspapers of 25th July.

Nevertheless, though the King's youngest brother, the Comte d'Artois, and his reactionary followers were scattered to the four winds, Dorset had the imprudence to write to congratulate him on his escape. The letter was intercepted, and the populace at once raised a hue and cry against the British embassy, it being well known that the Duke was on the most familiar terms with the highest aristocracy. Dorset thereupon wrote to the Duke of Leeds urging the need of stating officially the good will of England for France; and that Minister at once expressed "the earnest desire of His Majesty and his Ministers to cultivate and promote that friendship and harmony, which so happily subsists between the two countries." Dorset communicated this to the National Assembly on 3rd August; but that was his last official act. He forthwith returned to England, presumably because of the indiscretion related above.

During the next months the duties of the embassy devolved upon Lord Robert Stephen Fitzgerald (brother of the more famous Lord Edward), who was charged to do all in his power to cultivate friendly relations with the French Government, and, for the present at least, to discourage the visits of English tourists.[1] The new envoy certainly showed more tact than Dorset; but his despatches give the impression that he longed for the political reaction which he more than once predicted as imminent. We may notice here that the Pitt Cabinet showed no sign of uneasiness as to the safety of its archives at the Paris embassy until 5th March, when orders were issued to send back to London all the ciphers and deciphers. The attitude of Pitt towards French affairs was one of cautious observation.

In the meantime affairs at Paris went rapidly from bad to worse. The scarcity of ready money, the dearness of bread, and the wild stories of the so-called *pacte de famine*, for starving the populace into obedience, whetted class-hatreds, and rendered possible the extraordinary scenes of 5th and 6th October. As is well known, the tactlessness of the Queen and courtiers on the one side, and on the other the intrigues of the Duke of Orleans and his agents, led up to the weird march of the market-women and rabble of Paris upon Versailles, which brought the Royal Family captive into the capital.

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[1] "F. O.," France, 33. Leeds to Fitzgerald, 31st July. In B.M. Add. MSS., 28063, is a letter of the Duke of Richmond to the Marquis of Carmarthen of 21st September 1788, thanking him for sending to the Paris embassy his nephew, Lord R. Fitzgerald, in place of Daniel Hailes.

The absence of the Duke of Orleans being highly desirable, he was sent to London, ostensibly on a diplomatic mission, but really in order to get rid of him until affairs should have settled down.[1] The pretext was found in the troubles in the Austrian Netherlands. As we saw in the previous chapters, nothing could be more unlike the growingly democratic movement in France than the revolt of the Flemings and Brabanters against the anti-national reforms of Joseph II of Austria. Men so diverse as Burke and Dumouriez discerned that truth. The great Irishman in a letter to Rivarol termed the Belgian rising a resistance to innovation;[2] while to the French free-thinker it was *une révolution théocratique.* Nevertheless, as many Frenchmen cherished the hope of giving a prince to the Pays Bas, it was thought well to put forth a feeler London-wards; and Philippe Egalité in fancy saw himself enthroned at Brussels.

Such a solution would have been highly displeasing both at Westminster and at Windsor; and there is no proof that the Duke even mentioned it at Whitehall. In point of fact his mission was never taken seriously. George III, with characteristic acuteness in all matters relating to intrigue, had divined the secret motive of his journey and expressed it in the following hitherto unpublished letter to the Duke of Leeds:

> WINDSOR, *Oct.* 19, 1789. 9.55 a.m.[3]
>
> The language held by the Marquis de Luzerne to the Duke of Leeds on the proposed journey of the Duke of Orleans does not entirely coincide with the intelligence from Lord Robert Fitzgerald of the Duke's message to the States General [*sic*] announcing his absence as the consequence of a negotiation with which he is to be employed at this Court. I confess I attribute it to his finding his views not likely to succeed or some personal uneasiness for his own safety. . . .

The King argued correctly; and doubtless his suspicions ensured for the Duke a chilly reception at the Foreign Office. On 22nd or 23rd October Leeds saw him at his residence in London, but could get from him no more than polite professions of regard for England. Leeds thereupon urged Fitzgerald to find out whether the Duke's "mission" was a plausible pretext for securing his absence from Paris; to which our envoy replied that everyone at Paris spoke of him with indifference or contempt, and that Lafayette had discovered proofs of his complicity in the outrages of 5th to 6th October, and therefore had him sent away. On 6th November Fitzgerald added that Louis XVI had given the Duke no instructions whatever. Leeds had already come to much the same conclusion. On 30th October he saw Orleans, who merely suggested a close understanding between England and France, especially if the Emperor should march an army into his Belgic provinces. Leeds coolly replied that the desire of Joseph II to crush the revolt was most natural, and that France would do well to restore order at home rather than look with apprehension on events beyond her borders. As he accompanied these remarks with expressions of sincere commiseration for Louis XVI, Orleans must have seen that the secret of his involuntary mission was divined. This seems to be the only notice of it in the British archives. His sinister reputation and his association with loose company in London soon deprived him of all consequence.

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[1] See the threats of Lafayette to the Duke of Orleans in Huber's letter of 15th October 1789 to Lord Auckland ("Auckland Journals," ii, 365).

[2] Burke, "Corresp.," iii, 211.

[3] B.M. Add. MSS., 27914.

Pitt's attitude towards the Belgian Question has been already described. He seems to have given more time and thought to it than to the French Revolution—a fact which is not strange if we remember that the future of the Belgic lands was of untold importance for Great Britain. To secure their independence from France she had many times poured out her blood and treasure; and Pitt was destined to spend his last energies in the greatest of those efforts. Moreover, as we have seen, the European polity was far more seriously menaced by the schemes of Catharine, Joseph, and Hertzberg than by French reformers; and no one expected that in a short time the shifting kaleidoscope of European States would be altogether shivered by blows dealt from Paris. We, who know the outcome of events, are apt to accuse Pitt of shortsightedness for not concentrating his attention on France; but the criticism rests on the cheapest of all kinds of wisdom—wisdom after the event. In Pitt's mind the advent of militant democracy aroused neither ecstasy nor loathing. His royalism had nothing in common with the crusading zeal of Gustavus III, and therefore did not impel him to rescue the Bourbons from the troubles which resulted so largely from their participation in the American War. Here, as everywhere, Pitt allowed cold reason to rule; and reason suggested that the Bourbons might atone for that stupendous blunder as best they could. Besides, the experience of nations, as of families, forbade the interference of an outsider in domestic quarrels. Apart from its bearing on Belgian affairs, the French Revolution is scarcely named in Pitt's correspondence of this time.

Still more curious is it that the letters of George III to his Minister contain not a single reference to the Revolution. This silence respecting events of untold import for all crowned heads is explicable if we remember that to most men they seemed but the natural outcome of mismanagement and deficient harvests, which statesmanship and mother Nature would ere long set right. The proneness of George to look at everything from his own limited point of view was also at this time emphasized by ill health and family troubles, which blotted out weightier topics. Thus, on 1st May 1789, he declared his annoyance at the sudden return of Prince William from the West Indies —a proof that his paternal commands would never be obeyed. The Prince, he says, must now have the same allowance as the Duke of York. "I have," he adds, "but too much reason to expect no great comfort but an additional member to the opposite faction in my own family." He concludes with the desire that some arrangement may be made for the Queen and the princesses in case of his death; for his whole nervous system has sustained a great shock in the late illness. On 9th June the King again expresses to Pitt his regret that Prince William declines to return to sea. His letters during the rest of that exciting year are devoid of interest if we except the effort to reconcile Pitt and Thurlow referred to in Chapter XX.

The King's domestic dronings are varied on 14th January 1790 by an excited declaration that a frigate must be provided at once in order to convey Prince Edward, afterwards Duke of Kent, to Gibraltar, as it was of urgent importance that he should at once leave London.[1] On 3rd March he records his heartfelt joy at the failure of Fox's attempt to procure the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts; and on the 28th of that month occurs the first reference to the French Revolution which I have found in the King's letters. He then expresses to Pitt regret that the papers forwarded by the Comte d'Artois (younger brother of Louis XVI) and his political agent, Calonne, contain so little real information about the affairs of France. He continues thus: "Mr. Pitt's answer should be very civil, and may be very explicit as to no money or other means having been used to keep up the confusion in France; and M. de Calonne ought to convey those assurances wherever he thinks they may be of use."[1] Readers who have an eye for the ironies of history may notice that the first of the myriad stories thrown off by the perfervid Gallic imagination, as to the ubiquitous potency of British money in creating famines, arming assassins, and trumping up Coalitions against France, originated with the royalist exiles, who saw in the French Revolution the first manifestation of the wonder-working power of "Pitt's gold."

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[1] Pitt MSS., 102. No reason is assigned for this expatriation, which was probably due to the return of the prince from Geneva without permission. That the commander at Gibraltar, General O'Hara, received a hint to be strict with the young prince seems likely from his rebuke on a trifling occasion: "If you do not do your duty, I will make you do it" ("Napoleon and Sir Hudson Lowe," by R. C. Seaton, 32).

That statesman's opinion concerning the Revolution was first made known during the debates on the Army Estimates (5th and 9th February 1790). Having inserted in the King's Speech a reference to the friendly assurances which he received from all the Powers, and a guarded statement that the internal troubles in certain states engaged the King's "most serious attention," he was twitted by champions of economy with a slight increase in the army. True, the total provided for was only 17,448 officers and men; and part of the increase was due to the drafting of 200 men to keep order in the infant colony of New South Wales. But even these figures, which

barely could defy
The arithmetic of babes,

aroused the compunctions of Marsham, Fox, and Pulteney. They complained that, though most of our Colonial Empire had been lost, yet our army had been increased by thirteen regiments since the disastrous peace of 1783. Marsham deemed this increase "alarming," and wholly needless in view of the paralysis of France. Fox did not repeat the stale platitude that a standing army was a danger to liberty; for, as he pointed out, the French soldiers had shown themselves to be good citizens; but he opposed the present vote on the ground of economy, and because it was urgently necessary to strengthen the public credit, which could be done only by reductions of expenditure. He repeated these arguments in the second debate, that of 9th February.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 102. I have not found Pitt's letter to Calonne, though there are two others of 1795 to him.

On both occasions Pitt defended the proposed vote for the army, on the ground that "a small saving now might prove the worst economy, by involving us in disputes which might be attended with greater additional burthens to the kingdom." In the latter debate he skilfully used the admission of Fox, that any one who three years before had foretold the present convulsions in France would have been deemed a lunatic, in order to enforce the need of preparedness, it being no excuse for responsible Ministers to exclaim in the midst of disasters—"Who would have thought of it?" Then, as was his wont, he opened up wider vistas in this noble but, alas, less prophetic strain:

> The present convulsions of France must, sooner or later, terminate in general harmony and regular order; and though the fortunate arrangements of such a situation may make her more formidable, it may also render her less obnoxious as a neighbour. . . . Whenever the situation of France shall become restored, it will prove freedom rightly understood; freedom resulting from good order and good government; and thus circumstanced France will stand forward as one of the most brilliant Powers in Europe; she will enjoy just that kind of liberty which I venerate, and the valuable existence of which it is my duty, as an Englishman, peculiarly to cherish; nor can I, under this predicament, regard with envious eyes, an approximation in neighbouring States to those sentiments which are the characteristic features of every British subject. Easier, I will admit with the right hon. gentleman, is it to destroy than rebuild; and therefore I trust that this universally acknowledged position will convince gentlemen that they ought, on the present question, not to relax their exertions for the strength of the country, but endeavour to regain our former pinnacle of glory, and to improve, for our security, happiness and aggrandisement, those precious moments of peace and leisure which are before us.[1]

This statesmanlike utterance was not prompted by considerations of the mutability of human affars. The bent of Pitt's mind was too practical to be influenced by copy-book maxims.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 351.

Already, on 21st January, the first rumours had reached the Foreign Office, which portended serious friction with Spain. To this question we must devote the following chapter.

It will be well, however, to conclude this chapter by a few remarks on the standpoints from which Pitt and Burke viewed the French Revolution. They were in truth so different as scarcely to admit of comparison. The judgements of Pitt were those of a statesman of an objective order of mind, who weighed events carefully, judged men critically, and was content to change his policy as occasion required. In his view institutions were made for men, not men for institutions. But his zeal for Reform was tempered by respect for the verdicts of the past and by the knowledge that the progress of mankind must be slow if it is to be sure. He had lost much of his earlier zeal for Parliamentary Reform, but only because the people had seemed to care little for it, and were sincerely attached to their time-worn institutions. His attitude towards this great question during the stormy years of the Jacobin ascendancy will concern us later; and we need only notice here that, even at that time of political ferment, he never declared that under no circumstances would he bring in a Reform Bill, but always left open a door of hope in that direction when quieter days should return. For the present he repressed all movements which he considered seditious, dangerous, or likely to cause divisions; and for that alone he may be condemned by friends of progress.

From the other side he is censured for his lack of sympathy with the woes of a distressed King and Queen. Certainly we miss in his utterances any gush of genuine feeling on a subject which touched the inmost springs of emotion in our people. True, he had small ground for liking Louis XVI and his consort. The King of France had dealt the British Empire a deadly blow in America; and Marie Antoinette was an inveterate intriguer against England. Even up to the flight to Varennes at midsummer 1791, she impelled her brother, Leopold II of Austria, in his anti-English courses, which, as we shall see, cost us so dear. What was worse, she even accused England of having instigated all the disorders of which she was the victim. Nevertheless, it would have been generous to attribute this spitefulness to her narrow training and bitter sorrows. Pitt would have been a more engaging figure if he had occasionally shown a spark of that indignation which burnt so fiercely in

Burke. If he had any deep feelings on the subject, he chose to conceal them, perhaps from a conviction that the expression of them would do more harm than good.

Well would it have been for the cause of peace if the champion of French royalism in these islands had obeyed the dictates of reason which held Pitt tongue-tied. Unfortunately sentiment and emotion at this time reigned supreme in the great mind of Burke. Every student of history must admire the generous impulses which were incarnate in the great Irishman. They lent colour to the products of his imagination, and they lit up his actions with a glow which makes his blunders more brilliant than the dull successes of mediocre men. Where sentiment was a safe guide, there Burke led on with an energy that was not less conspicuous than his insight. Where critical acumen, mental balance, and self-restraint were needed, the excess of his qualities often led him far astray. The true function of such a man is to interpret the half-felt impulses of the many. If he seek to guide them to definite solutions, his ardent temperament is apt to overshoot the mark. Observers noted how Burke's vehement conduct of the Warren Hasting's affair injured his cause; and many more were soon to discern the same failing when, with Celtic ardour, he rushed into the complex mazes of the French Revolution.

Opinions will always differ as to the merits of his remarkable book on that subject. Its transcendent literary excellences at once ensured it an influence enjoyed by no other political work of that age; but we are here concerned with his "Reflections" not as literature, but as criticism on the French movement. Even in this respect he rightly gauged some of the weaknesses of Gallic democracy. He was the first of Britons to discern the peril to the cause of freedom when the brutal fury of the populace broke forth in the hour of its first triumph, the surrender of the Bastille, and still more in the Jacqueries that followed. He also gave eloquent and imperishable expression to the feeling of respect for all that is venerable, in which the French reformers were sadly deficient; and, while he bade them save all that could be saved of their richly-storied past, he truly foretold their future if they gave rein to their iconoclastic zeal. In my judgement the passage in which Burke foretells the advent of Bonaparte is grander even than that immortal rhapsody on the fate of Marie Antoinette and the passing away of the age of chivalry. The one is the warning of a prophet; the latter is the wail of a genius.

Equally profound are his warnings to the French enthusiasts of the danger of applying theories to the infinite complexities of an old society. To quote some sentences:

> The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught *a priori*. Nor is it a short experience that can instruct us in that practical science, because the real effects of moral causes are not always immediate. . . . The science of government being therefore so practical in itself, and intended for such practical purposes, a matter which requires experience, and even more experience than any person can gain in his whole life, however sagacious and observing he may be, it is with infinite caution that any man ought to venture upon pulling down an edifice, which has answered in any tolerable degree for ages the common purposes of society, or on building it up again, without having models and patterns of approved utility before his eyes. . . . The nature of man is intricate; the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity; and therefore no simple disposition or direction of power can be suitable either to man's nature, or to the quality of his affairs. When I hear the simplicity of contrivance aimed at and boasted of in any new political constitutions, I am at no loss to decide that the artificers are grossly ignorant of their trade, or totally negligent of their duty. . . . The rights of men in governments are their advantages, and these are often in balances between differences of good, in compromises sometimes between good and evil, and sometimes between evil and evil. . . . I cannot conceive how any man can have brought himself to that pitch of presumption to consider his country as nothing but *carte blanche*, upon which he may scribble whatever he pleases.

We are here reminded of the saying of Dumont, the friend of Mirabeau, that the fear of being thought officious and interfering is as universal among the English as is the desire of the French of taking a prominent part and interfering in everything.[1] This home thrust by the able Swiss thinker goes far to explain the difference between the Revolution of 1688 in England and that of a century later in France. Vanity, love of the sensational, and a mania for wholesale reconstruction on geometrical designs largely account for the failures of the French revolutionists; and Burke's warnings on these heads were treated with the petulant disdain characteristic of clever children.

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[1] Dumont, "Souvenirs sur Mirabeau," ch. x.

Burke also did good service by pointing out the fundamental differences between the general overturn in France and the "glorious Revolution" of 1688 in England. Slipshod comparisons of the two events were then much in vogue, witness the sermon of Dr. Price in the Old Jewry, on which Burke conferred the fame of a never ending pillory. The Whigs, who formed a rapidly thinning tail behind their impetuous leader, were never tired of discovering historical parallels; and it is possible that Pitt's sympathy with Whiggism, stunted but not wholly blighted by Parliamentary friction, led him to the hopeful prophecy already quoted. Certainly very many Frenchmen saw themselves in fancy entering on peaceful paths of progress under a more genial William III. At the time when Burke was completing his "Reflections," Wordsworth and his friend during a Long Vacation tour in France were met with warmest cheer by *fédérés* who had shared in the ecstatic Festival of the Federation (14th July 1790):

> And with their swords flourished as if to fight
> The saucy air.

At once the Englishmen were greeted as brothers.

> We bore a name
> Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,
> And hospitably did they give us hail
> As their fore-runners in a glorious course.

All this was very pleasing; but it could only end in bitter estrangement when France was found to be concerned, not with "preventing a Revolution" (as Burke finely showed that England did in 1688[1]), but in carrying through with unimaginable zeal a political overturn, along with social, religious, and agrarian changes of the most drastic kind. This was evident enough even by the summer of 1790. Feudalism had been swept away root and branch; copy-holders had become free-holders; the old taxes were no more—and none had definitely taken their place; titles of nobility were abolished; and the Assembly declared war on the discipline and on one of the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. Well might Burke stand aghast and declare that this cataclysm had little or nothing in common with the insular, conservative, and constitutional efforts of Englishmen a century before.

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[1] He calls it "a parent of settlement, not a nursery of future Revolutions."

Strange to say, the defects of his book arose largely from his underrating the differences between the two movements. In his eagerness to preserve Englishmen from the risk of hazily sympathizing with French democracy, he inveighed against the new doctrines with a zeal that was not always born of knowledge. Forgetting his earlier adage respecting America—"I will never draw up an indictment against a whole people"—he sought to convict Frenchmen of fickleness and insanity. He calls the Revolution "this strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and of all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies"; and he even ventured to prophesy that in France learning would be "trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude." Coming nearer to facts, he took the French to task for not repairing their old constitution. He likened it to a venerable castle in which some of the walls and all the foundations were still in existence, and added the surprising statement—"you had the elements of a constitution very nearly as good as could be wished."

Here Burke went wholly astray. A constitution, which gave to the King a power limited only by the occasional protests of the Paris and other "Parlements"; under which the States-General (at best little more than an advisory body) had not been summoned for 175 years; which assigned to the "*Tiers Etat*" only one third of the legislative power and no control over the executive, though the Commons of France paid nearly all the taxation; and which promised to perpetuate the old division into three classes,—such a constitution was merely an interesting blend of the principles of Feudalism and Absolute Monarchy, but could never satisfy a nation which had listened to Voltaire and given its heart to Rousseau. Sir Philip Francis, with his usual incisiveness, pointed out to Burke that the French could not act as we did in 1688, for they had no constitution to recur to, much less one that was "very nearly as good as could be wished."

In truth, Burke did not know France. Hence his work is of permanent value only where he praises English methods and launches into wise and noble generalizations. For his own people it will ever be the political Book of Proverbs. His indictments against the French people in the main flew over their heads. On most insufficient knowledge he ventured on sweeping assertions which displayed the subtlety and wide sweep of his thought, but convinced only those who did not know the difficulties besetting the men of 1789. Nevertheless, as readers are influenced far more by emotion than by close and exact reason, the vast majority were carried away by the rush of feeling of that mighty soul; and hence in the view of a philosophic monarchist like Dumont, the publication of the "Reflections" was destined to be "the salvation of Europe." Certainly it was the first noteworthy effort of a literary man to stem the tide of democracy; and if the writer had advocated a practicable scheme for saving the French monarchy—say, on the lines of that of Mirabeau—he would have rendered an inestimable service. As it was, even the voice of a genius failed to convince the French people that they must build their new fabric on the lines laid down by Philip the Fair and Louis the Fourteenth.

While the "Reflections" caused little but irritation in France, they also worked some harm in England. Readers by the thousand were captivated by the glamour of Burke's style, and became forthwith the sworn foes of the persecutors of Marie Antoinette. The fall of that erstwhile "morning star, full of life and splendour and joy," involved in one common gloom the emotions and the reason of Britons. "It is the noblest, deepest, most animated and exalted work that I think I have ever read." So wrote Fanny Burney. The superlatives are significant. Thenceforth events in France were viewed through the distorting medium of a royalist romance. The change was fatal in every way. England, which heretofore had guardedly sympathized with the French reformers, now swung round to antagonism; and the French princes who at Turin and Coblentz were striving to frame a Coalition against their native land, saw in fancy John Bull as the paymaster of the monarchist league, with Burke as the chief trumpeter.

In truth the great writer ran some risk of sinking to this level. He became the unofficial representative of the French princes in this country, while his son, Richard Burke, proceeded to Coblentz to work on behalf of that clamorous clique. Memoir after memoir appeared from the pen of Burke himself. Now it was a protest, purporting to emanate from George III, against despoiling the French monarchy of all its rights, and asserting that, if this caution were unheeded, our ambassador would leave Paris.[1] Now again it was a memorandum of advice to the

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[1] Burke's "Works," iii, 345 (Bohn edit.).

Queen of France, urging her to have nothing to do with traitors (*i.e.*, reformers), to maintain an attitude of silent disdain of their offered help, and, above all, to induce her consort to refuse the new democratic constitution.[1] Fortunately neither of these documents went beyond the doors of Burke's study; but they survive as curious proofs of his now distracted mood.

It was the misfortune of Burke at this time that majesty of diction deserted him at Westminster, where his speeches and demeanour bore the imprint of petulance and sourness. This appeared most painfully in the famous scene which marked his severance from Fox. It occurred during the debates on the Canada Bill in the spring of 1791. The preoccupation of men's minds with the French constitution, then slowly taking shape, had been apparent in the course of the session. Fox had often dragged in the subject to express his warm sympathy with the democrats of Paris, and now desired to assimilate the Canada Bill somewhat to the French model. To this Burke offered vehement opposition, out-doing Fox in iteration. On 6th May, when the subject at issue was Canada, he defied the rules of the House by speaking solely on France. Six times he was called to order. Still he went on, in more and more heated tones, until he crowned his diatribe with the declaration that the difference between him and his friend involved an end of their connection; for with his latest words he would exclaim: "Fly from the French Constitution." Fox here whispered to him: "There is no loss of friends." "Yes," retorted Burke, "there is a loss of friends; I know the price of my conduct; I have done my duty at the price of my friend; our friendship is at an end." A little later, when Fox rose to reply, words failed him and tears trickled down his cheeks.[2] No scene in Parliament in that age produced so profound an emotion. It deepened the affection felt for that generous statesman; while the once inspiring figure of Burke now stood forth in the hard and repellent outlines of a fanatic.

Far better would it have been had he confined himself to the higher domains of literature, where he was at home. His "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs," which appeared in July 1791, is a great and moving production; and his less known "Thoughts on French Affairs" (December 1791) is remarkable for its keen insight into the causes that made for disruption or revolt in the European lands, not even excluding Great Britain.[1] In this one respect Burke excelled Pitt, just as nervous apprehension will detect dangers ahead that are hidden from the serene gaze of an optimist. Wilberforce judged Pitt to be somewhat deficient in foresight;[2] and we may ascribe this defect to his intense hopefulness and his lack of close acquaintance with men in this country and, still more, on the Continent. Burke found that both the Prime Minister and Grenville had not the slightest fear of the effect of revolutionary ideas in this Kingdom "either at present or at any time to come."[3] Here Burke was the truer prophet. But how could Pitt sift the wise from the unwise in the copious output of Burke's mind? They mingle so closely as to bewilder the closest observer even now, when the mists of passion enveloping those controversies have partly cleared away. Sentiment palpitated visibly in all Burke's utterances; and the teachings of the philosopher were lost amidst the diatribes of the partisan.

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[1] Burke, "Corresp.," iii, 285-8.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 364-88.

In fact, it was difficult for a practical statesman to take the orator seriously. In April 1791 he had furiously attacked Pitt's Russian policy; and, as we have seen, the differences between them were more than political, they were temperamental. No characteristic of Pitt is more remarkable than the balance of his faculties and the evenness of his disposition. No defect in Burke's nature is more patent than his lack of self-control, to which, rather than to his poverty, I am inclined to ascribe his exclusion from the Whig Cabinets. Irritability in small things had long been his bane; and now to the solution of the greatest problem in modern history he brought a fund of passion and prejudice equal to that of any of the French *émigrés* who were pestering the Courts of Europe to crush the new ideas by force.

Yet, however much Pitt mistrusted Burke the politician, he admired him as a writer; so at least we gather from a somewhat enigmatical reference in Wilberforce's diary. "22nd November (1790): Went to Wimbledon—Dundas, Lord Chatham, Pitt, Grenville, Ryder. Much talk about Burke's book. Lord Chatham, Pitt and I seemed to agree: *contra*, Grenville and Ryder."[4] If this entry be correct, Wilberforce and Grenville were destined soon to change their opinions. It may be that Pitt and Wilberforce agreed with Burke owing to their dislike of the iconoclastic methods of the French democrats, and that Grenville's cold nature was repelled by the sentimentalism of the book.

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[1] Burke's "Works," iii, 347-93 (Bohn edit.).

[2] "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 71.

[3] Burke, "Corresp." iii, 344.

[4] "Life of Wilberforce," i, 284.

In their judgements on the French Revolution Pitt and Burke stood not far apart. Pitt knew France no better than the great Irishman, and he distrusted theorizers and rash innovators fully as much, especially when their symmetrical notions were carried out by mobs. But the two men differed sharply as to the remedy. Burke came to believe more and more in armed intervention; Pitt saw in it ruin for French royalists and turmoil throughout the Continent. Here again the difference was in the main one of temperament. In Burke's nature the eagerness and impulsiveness of the Celt was degenerating into sheer fussiness, which drew him toward the camp of the *émigrés* who strutted and plotted at Turin and Coblentz. Pitt's coolness and reserve bade him distrust those loud-tongued fanatics, whose political rhapsodies awoke a sympathetic chord in no ruler save Gustavus of Sweden. True, Catharine of Russia shrilly bade them God-speed; but, as we shall see, her distant blessings were the outcome of Muscovite diplomacy rather than of royalist zeal.

Pitt and Grenville, who saw other things in life besides the woes of Marie Antoinette and Jacobin outrages, were resolved not to lead the van of the monarchical crusade. They might approve Burke's sage production, the "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs," which won the warm commendation of the King, as well as of Grenville, Camden, and Dundas, but they were bent on maintaining strict neutrality on the French Question. Pitt and his cousin met Burke more than once in the summer and autumn of 1791; but they kept their thoughts veiled, probably because Burke was working hard for the royalist league which the French Princes hoped to form. The general impression produced on Burke was that the Court of St. James would certainly not act against the champions of monarchy, but would preserve a benevolent neutrality. Other observers took a different view. The Russian ambassador, Vorontzoff, declared that Pitt was a democrat at heart, and kept up the naval armaments in order to intimidate the royalists, while he sent Hugh Elliot to Paris to concert measures along with Barnave.[1] These stories are of value merely because they illustrate Pitt's power of holding back his trump cards and thereby rehabilitating the national prestige, which had recently suffered at the hands of the Czarina. At such a crisis silence is often a potent weapon. The Arab "Book of Wisdom" asserts that wisdom consists in nine parts of silence; while the tenth part is brevity of utterance. If Burke had realized this truth, his political career would not have ended in comparative failure. By acting on it, Pitt disconcerted his interviewers and exasperated his biographers; but he helped to keep peace on the Continent for nearly a year longer; and he assured that boon to his country for nearly two years. Had Burke been in power, the coalesced monarchs would have attacked France in the late summer of 1791.

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[1] Burke, "Corresp.," iii, 238, 239, 255, 267, 274, 275, 278, 291, 302, 308, 336, 342.

CHAPTER XXV

THE DISPUTE WITH SPAIN

> It is bad economy to tempt an attack, from a state of weakness, and thus by a miserable saving ultimately incur the hazard of a great expense.—PITT, *Speech of 9th February* 1790.

ON 21st January 1790 there arrived at Whitehall news of an outrage committed by a Spanish officer on the crew of a British vessel trading on the dimly known coast which was destined to be called Vancouver Island. The affair became infinitely more serious on 11th February when the Spanish ambassador in London, the Marquis del Campo, forwarded to our Foreign Minister, the Duke of Leeds, an official demand that the British Government should punish certain interlopers who had ventured to trade and settle at Nootka Sound on that coastline, which Spain then considered as part of her Californian domain and for ever closed to outsiders. This demand produced a state of tension between the two nations, and subsequent incidents threatened to involve us in war, not only with Spain, but with her ally, France. As the outcome of this Nootka Sound dispute was the acquisition by Great Britain of a coastline of infinite value to Canada and the Empire at large, it will be well briefly to describe its origin, its settlement, and its bearing on the French Revolution.

Nootka Sound, a fine natural harbour on the western coast of what is now called Vancouver Island, was explored and named by Captain Cook in the course of his memorable voyage of the year 1778. He stayed there one month, and bought from the Indians a number of furs which proved to be of great value in the eyes of the Chinese. In the following years British and Spanish ships touched at Nootka; but owing to the American War, or to the torpor of mercantile enterprise in those days, nothing definite came of the discovery until the year 1785.

Certain merchants of the British East India Company trading to China then resolved to open up trade between that country and the west coast of America. The commodities sought for the Chinese market were furs and ginseng, a plant used as a drug by the celestials. In the following year two small vessels, the "Sea Otter" and the "Nootka," sailed to the American coast, and though the former was wrecked, the latter carried back to China a valuable cargo. The owners replaced her by the "Felice" and "Iphigenia," which in 1788 sailed to the same coast. The senior captain, John Meares, a retired lieutenant of the royal navy, bought a piece of land at Nootka from the Indian chief, Maquilla, formed a small settlement, fortified it, and hoisted the British flag. His vessels then traded along the coast as far as 60° and 45° 30′, that is, beyond the Columbia River on the south, and as far as Mount St. Elias, in what is now the United States territory of Alaska, but was then recognized as belonging to Russia's sphere of influence.[1]

At Nootka the adventurous pioneers built a sloop of 40 tons, the "North-West America," and bought from Indian chiefs the right of "free and exclusive" trade with their subjects. As autumn drew on Meares sailed away to China in the "Felice," and there persuaded other merchants to combine in order to form an Associated Company for developing this lucrative commerce. Accordingly, three more ships, the "Prince of Wales," "Princess Royal," and "Argonaut," set sail for Nootka in the spring of 1789 under the command of Captain Colnett, who was to reside at that settlement. It is curious to note thus early the emergence of the yellow question, for he carried with him seventy Chinamen who were to settle there under the protection of the Associated Company—a proof that the occupation of Nootka was to be permanent.

Strange to say, the Spanish Government, acting through its Viceroy of Mexico, was then bent on the acquisition of this very same district. By virtue of the Bull of Pope Alexander VI, and the treaty of Tordesillas (1494), which speedily followed, Spain claimed exclusive right over the Pacific Ocean and all the western coast of America as far north as latitude 60°, beyond which were the Russian settlements in Alaska. In the year

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[1] The following narrative is founded mainly on documents in "F. O.," Spain, 17, 18, 19; but I have found a monograph by Dr. W. R. Manning, "The Nootka Sound Controversy" (Washington, 1905), most serviceable.

1774, that is, four years before Cook's enterprise, a Spanish captain, Perez, had sailed to Nootka and as far north as latitude 55°. But no account of his voyage, or of one made in the following year, had been given to the world. Neither had the Spaniards made any attempt to trade at Nootka, nor to form a settlement, until they heard of the efforts of the Russians and English to open up trade with the natives. Then, indeed, they took alarm; and the Viceroy of Mexico despatched two vessels, under the command of Captain Martinez, with orders to warn off intruders, and, in case of armed resistance, to use force in vindicating the claims of Spain. The Viceroy and Martinez knew nothing concerning the new developments at Nootka, and had in view the Russians rather than the British.

Long before the arrival of Colnett, and while the "Iphigenia" alone was at Nootka, there sailed in, on 5th May, a Spanish frigate, the "Princesa." Shortly after she was joined by a sloop. Meares had previously provided Douglas, the captain of the "Iphigenia," with papers proving that she was a Portuguese ship, hailing from Macao, the Portuguese settlement near Canton. In reality, however, she was a British ship with a British cargo. Despite the arguments of Douglas, Martinez soon divined the truth, and took possession of her as well as the infant settlement of Nootka.[1] A little later he seized the "North-West America"; and when the "Argonaut" arrived from China, she too fell into his hands by a treacherous ruse, so Colnett averred. The "Princess Royal" was the next victim. Fortune certainly favoured Martinez in having to deal with the British ships as they dropped in singly; and he played his game with skill and success.

The truth respecting the subsequent occurrences cannot be disentangled from the false or exaggerated accounts of the disputants. Meares, Colnett, and Douglas asserted on oath that they had been treacherously seized and barbarously treated. Martinez declared that his behaviour throughout was humane and considerate. His statements were backed by those of certain American traders who were there present; but, as they for a time made common cause with Martinez, their evidence is not convincing. The assertions of Meares and Colnett on this point are antecedently credible, it being the habit of Spain to treat interlopers as little better than privateers. Martinez compelled his prisoners (so they asserted) to assist in building a stockade, and subsequently treated Colnett with so much indignity that he tried to commit suicide, and Hanson, one of his petty officers, actually did so. The Spanish commander then traded with the captured vessels, and finally collected skins estimated by Meares to be worth about 7,500 Spanish dollars. The British ships and crews were afterwards taken to the Spanish port of San Blas, where the governor treated them with more consideration, and, though regarding them virtually as privateers, released them and submitted the fate of their ships to an official inquiry. The whole truth of the Nootka incident will probably never be cleared up. What concerns us here is the impression produced on Pitt by the statements of Meares. They were set forth in a Memorial, dated London, 30th April 1790. Meares laid stress on the perfidy and cruelty of Martinez, and estimated his own losses at 500,000 Spanish dollars, apart from the ruin of the trade along the Nootka coast.[1]

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[1] I cannot agree with Dr. Manning (p. 360) that there were no signs of a British occupation of Nootka when Martinez arrived. The reverse is antecedently probable, and is asserted in Meares' "Memorial."

Reports of these events filtered through to London very slowly. Merry, British *chargé d'affaires* at Madrid, sent the first vague rumours of them in a despatch which, as we have seen, reached Whitehall on 21st January; but the situation became fraught with danger on 11th February, when the Spanish envoy in London handed in a despatch drawn up in terms no less haughty than misleading. After presenting a distorted view of the Nootka incident, del Campo asserted the right of Spain to absolute sovereignty in those districts "which have been occupied and frequented by the Spaniards for so many years." He further requested the British Government to punish such undertakings as those of Meares and Colnett, but closed with the statement that the British prisoners had been liberated through the consideration which the King of Spain had for His Britannic Majesty.

Compliance with this demand was, of course, out of the question, for it would have implied the closing of the north-west coast of America to every flag but the red and yellow ensign of Spain; and the request for the punishment of British seamen, whose ships had admittedly been seized, added insult to injury. Pitt and his colleagues as yet knew very little of the facts of the case. The dimness of the notions then entertained about that region appears in a phrase used by Robert Liston, our envoy at Stockholm, that the waters behind Nootka Sound may be the opening to the long-sought North-West Passage.[1] In any case the demands of Spain carried with them their own condemnation. Accordingly, on 26th February, the Duke of Leeds replied to del Campo that the act of violence committed by Martinez "makes it necessary henceforth to suspend all discussion of the pretensions set forth in that letter until a just and adequate satisfaction shall have been made for a proceeding so injurious to Great Britain."[2]

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[1] The "Memorial" is among the British archives in "F. O.," Spain, 17. For a critique of it see Manning.

The writing here was that of Leeds, but the resolve was the resolve of Pitt. The original draft of this despatch is in the handwriting of the Prime Minister. As at so many crises, he took the conduct of affairs directly into his own hands; and Leeds, though he doubtless agreed with him, was only his mouthpiece. George III and Pitt were equally desirous of peace; but on this occasion their determination was immutable. Satisfaction must be given for the insult, or else war must ensue. In his despatch of the same date to Merry at Madrid, the Duke stoutly contested the right of Spain to the exclusive sovereignty, commerce, and navigation of the coasts north of California, and asserted the determination of the Court of St. James to protect its subjects trading in that part of the Pacific Ocean.[3]

When the facts stated on oath by Meares were known by Ministers, they realized the extreme gravity of the case. Their demand for satisfaction having been ignored by the Court of

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[1] Liston to Auckland, 14th September 1790 (B.M. Add. MSS., 34433).

[2] "F. O.," Spain, 16.

[3] *Ibid.* That this resolve was that of the whole Cabinet appears in the following letter in the Pitt MSS. It is from Pitt to Leeds:

"Downing Street, Tuesday morning, *Feb.* 23, 1790.

"I cannot help begging to remind your Grace of the wish expressed that the answer to the Spanish ambassador should if possible be circulated before our meeting to-day. I am the more anxious about this, as no one would like to give a final opinion on the terms of a paper of so much delicacy and importance without having had an opportunity of considering them beforehand."

Madrid,[1] they determined, at a Cabinet Council held on the evening of 30th April, to demand "immediate and adequate satisfaction for the outrages committed by Mr. de Martinez," and to back up that demand by the equipment of several ships of the line. George III agreed with his Ministers, though with some reluctance; and the press-gang set to work on 4th May to man the new squadron. The affair came as a bolt from the blue. Most of the sailors in the Thames were seized; and the prospect of war caused Consols to drop three per cent. Ministers, however, were justified in taking this step. After the Spanish note of 20th April they saw that Spain would not renounce her exclusive right to the Pacific Coast of America save under pressure of force.[2] The question of peace or war turned on two things; the relative naval strength of the two Powers, and the ability of the Court of Madrid to gain an ally, presumably France.

Deferring for the present the question of the Franco-Spanish Alliance, we notice that on sea Great Britain had a decided superiority over Spain. Though the Spanish marine was far from weak it could not cope with the imposing force which the care and energy of Pitt had amassed at our dockyards. As has been pointed out in Chapter IX, he frequently inspected the details of construction, and held the Comptroller of the Navy personally responsible to him for the due progress of new ships and the efficiency of the fleet. Thanks to his close supervision, and the large sums voted for the navy, there were at this time no fewer than ninety-three sail of the line fit for active service.[3]

This gratifying result cannot be ascribed to the First Lord of the Admiralty. In July 1788, on the resignation of Lord Howe, Pitt raised his brother, Lord Chatham, to that responsible post, Lord Hood being added to the Admiralty Board. Chatham was personally popular but proved to be indolent as an administrator, his unpunctuality earning him the nickname of "the late Lord Chatham." That excellent administrator, Sir Charles Middleton (the future Lord Barham), refused to serve under him after the reforms recommended by a Commission of Inquiry were shelved, and in March 1790 resigned office, pointing out, however, that the Navy and dockyards were never better prepared for war.[1]

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[1] See del Campo's note of 20th April, in Manning, 374, 375.

[2] "Dropmore P.," i, 579, 580; "F. O.," Spain, 17.

[3] "Journals of Sir T. Byam Martin" (Navy Records Soc.), iii, 381, 382.

Despite the formidable strength of the British navy, Spain might have entered on a contest with some chance of success. We are apt to forget that her period of swift decline under Charles IV had only just begun. His predecessor, Charles III, who died in 1788, had raised the credit and power of that land almost to the lofty heights of ancient days. He had helped to humble the might of England in the American war, and his army and navy were kept in a state of efficiency which enabled Spain to rank as one of the Great Powers. On his death there came an insidious change. In place of vigour and even-handed justice there crept in all the evils linked with sloth and favouritism. The statesman Count Floridablanca, who had done much to promote the prosperity of Spain, saw his influence sapped by the intrigues of the minions of the Queen, who was to be the evil genius of the realm. But in the year 1790 the dry-rot had not appreciably affected that imposing fabric. Outwardly Spain appeared to be almost a match for the Island Power. Towards the end of July 1790, she had at sea thirty-four sail of the line and sixteen smaller craft.[2]

The pride of two of the most susceptible nations having been touched to the quick, war seemed inevitable. On 10th May Pitt moved for a vote of credit of a million sterling for the necessary armament; this was at once agreed to.[3] Parliament also supported the Ministry by large majorities whenever the Opposition attempted to censure their action on points of detail. Several pamphlets appeared inveighing against the monstrous claims of Spain to the control of the Pacific. There was a weak point in her armour, and at this Pitt aimed a deadly shaft. Already the Spaniards of South and Central America were restive under the galling yoke of their colonial system, which was so contrived as to enrich officials and privileged merchants in Spain at the expense of the new lands. The result was that at Quito a pound of iron sold for 4*s.* 6*d.*, and a pound of steel for 6*s.* 9*d.*[4] It is not surprising that the stoutest spirits longed to break loose from a Government by comparison with which that of England in the United States had been mildness and wisdom personified.

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[1] "The Barham P." (Navy Records Soc.), ii, 337-47.

[2] Manning, 408.

[3] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 785.

[4] "Wealth of Nations," bk. iv, ch. vii, pt. 2.

The mouthpiece of the discontent of the land now called Venezuela was a man of strongly marked personality, Miranda by name. An exile from his native city of Caracas, he had spent several years wandering about Europe, until the events at Paris drew him to that focus of enthusiasm and effort. There he became acquainted with Brissot and others who were interested in the emancipation of subject peoples. But now the prospect of a war between England and Spain attracted him to London. Pitt invited him to a first interview on the evening of 9th May. The daring adventurer there unfolded his plan of revolutionizing Spanish America; and, in case of war, his commanding personality and intrepid spirit would have stirred up a serious ferment. Here was a formidable weapon against Spain; and Pitt in the course of several interviews with Miranda prepared to use it with effect. Hopes ran high in London that Spain would be crippled by the action of her own sons in the New World, a fitting return to her for assisting the revolt of the English colonists a decade before. Auckland, our envoy at The Hague, wrote on 29th June 1790: "It is believed there are serious troubles in South America; but that circumstance seems to afford the strongest reason for avoiding a quarrel with England. It is wonderful to a cool bystander to see with what infatuated alacrity several sovereigns are running towards the embarrassments which have brought Louis XVI and his dominions to the distracted and desperate state in which we now see them."[1]

Meanwhile Pitt and Leeds had nailed their colours to the mast in the despatch of 4th May, which dismissed the reply of the Spanish Court, dated 20th April, as wholly inadmissible. By way of retort to its claim of exclusive possession of the seas and coasts north of California up to latitude 60°, the British Government asserted for its subjects in those parts the "unquestioned right to a free and undisturbed enjoyment of the benefits of commerce, navigation, and fishery, and also to the possession of such establishments as they may form, with the consent of the natives, in places unoccupied by other European nations."[1] In this declaration lies the charter of the future colony of British Columbia. Alleyne Fitzherbert, who had already had a creditable record in diplomacy, now proceeded on a special mission to Madrid to make good these claims, if possible by peaceable means. Among the twenty-two "Instructions" is one bidding him weaken the Family Compact of 1761, which bound together the Kings of France and Spain in close alliance, and point out to the Spanish Ministers the desirability of substituting for it a friendly understanding with Great Britain both in political and commercial affairs.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 35542. Miranda's relations with Pitt were renewed in 1804. On 13th June 1805 he sought to dispel some suspicions which Pitt had formed of him, and added: "Je n'ai jamais départi un instant des principes politiques et moraux qui formèrent notre première liaison politique en 1790." See, too, an interesting article on Miranda in the "Amer. Hist. Rev.," vol. vi, for proofs of the dealings of Pitt with Miranda at that time. On 12th September 1791 Pitt wrote to him stating that he could not grant him the pension he asked for, or the sum of £1,000: £500 must suffice for the expenses incurred during his stay in London (Pitt MSS., 102).

From the outset Pitt and his colleagues realized that the question of peace or war depended largely on France. Had that Power been in a condition to fight, the Bourbon States would certainly have contested England's claim, and in that case she might have been for ever excluded from the Pacific Coast of America. Fitzherbert therefore stayed a few days at Paris (an indisposition afforded a pretext for delay) in order to fathom those turbid waters. The foreign policy of France was still nominally in the hands of Montmorin; but that Minister, never strong, had been almost cowed by events. Fitzherbert found him most gracious, but he could not explain away the recent order for equipping fourteen sail of the line at Brest. The most threatening symptom, however, was the warlike attitude of the royalist side of the National Assembly, which on 20th May he thus described to the Duke of Leeds:

> . . . I can plainly perceive that many other members of the aristocratical faction are anxious to avail themselves of the opportunity to bring on a war, in the hope that the general distress and confusion which must almost inevitably follow, might ultimately tend to the re-establishment of the royal authority upon its former footing. Many strong indications of this design have appeared in the insidious language which they have held of late, speaking of Great Britain both in the National Assembly and without doors. However, their opponents begin to be aware of their drift, and it seems to have been principally with a view of guarding against such designs that the latter have chosen the present time for carrying into execution their plan of transferring the power of making War and Peace from the Crown to the National

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 17.

Assembly. It also appears highly probable that, when this question shall be disposed of, it will be followed up by some motion tending to invalidate, if not entirely to annul, the Family Compact.

How curiously the wheels of human action act and interact! The outrage on British sailors on the dimly known coast of Vancouver Island furnished French democrats with a potent motive for driving another nail into the coffin of the old monarchy. In any case the right of Louis XVI to declare war and make peace would have been challenged—for how can Democracy allow a Sovereign wholly to control its policy at the most important of all crises—but now the need was overwhelming. If the old prerogative held good, the rusty link that bound together the fortunes of France and Spain would compel free Frenchmen to fight their English neighbours whenever a Spanish captain thought fit to clap in irons British voyagers to the Pacific.

The question aroused gusts of passion at Paris. Enormous crowds waited outside the Tuileries while the deputies hard by were debating this question (16th and 22nd May). To the surprise of the people the royal prerogative was upheld by Mirabeau. The great orator descanted forcibly on the need of energy and secrecy in the diplomacy of a great nation, and reminded those who ascribed all wars to the intrigues of Courts that popular assemblies had often declared war in a fit of passion. He remarked that members had all applauded a speaker who advocated war against England if she attacked Spain, and the expenditure of their last man and their last crown in reducing London.[1] Few of Mirabeau's speeches were more convincing. Nevertheless, on coming forth from the Chamber he was threatened with violence; and a pamphlet, "Great Treason of Count Mirabeau" was hawked about the streets. His reasoning, however, ensured the carrying of a compromise on 22nd May. The right of declaring war and making peace was vested in the King: and war was to be decided only by a decree of the Legislature, on "the formal and necessary proposition of the King, and afterwards sanctioned by him."[2] The position was thus left far from clear; and Camille Desmoulins, referring to the ups and downs of the debate, summarized it thus: "The question was decided, firstly, in favour of the nation, secondly, in favour of the King; thirdly, in favour of both." The royalists were highly displeased. Their best speaker, Cazalès, declared that nothing was now left to the monarchy—an exclamation which probably revealed his disgust at the passing away of the opportunity of a war with England.

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[1] "Travaux de Mirabeau" (1792), iii, 319.

[2] W. Legg, "Select Documents on the Fr. Rev.," i, 226 and F. Masson, "Département des Affaires étrangères," 79, 80.

Meanwhile Pitt had worked hard to array his allies, Prussia and Holland, against Spain. In this he succeeded. In particular, he offered to the Dutch a considerable subsidy for arming a squadron as if for war. To this topic he referred in a letter of 18th May 1790, to Auckland. After informing him that the tellership of the Exchequer would be reserved for him, or one of his sons, besides a pension of £2,000 a year on retirement, he continued thus:

> I cannot help adding how much satisfaction I have felt in your account of everything at The Hague. You have done us a most essential service in bringing the States into a disposition to act at the present moment with a dispatch so unusual to them. This messenger carries instructions to you to engage for the expenses which you have stated to be likely to be incurred for fitting out ten sail-of-the-line. You will, I am sure, take care that the expense shall not be swelled beyond what is really necessary; but, if even a greater sum should be really wanting, we shall not scruple to give it; and, if you find that they can go on to prepare a still greater number of ships, it will be so much the better. I can hardly form at present a conjecture of the event of our preparations, as I can hardly conceive either that the Spaniards will ultimately persist, or that they can have gone so far without a determination not to recede. I hope we shall be able to send an answer about the commercial treaty very soon.[1]

Pitt's economy is here seen to be far removed from the penny-wise and pound-foolish kind. If necessary, he was prepared to lavish subsidies on the Dutch, and on Prussia as well, in order to overawe Spain. The Duke of Leeds and he were of one mind as to the need of the most energetic measures. On 2nd June the Duke wrote to him that the Spanish proposals were quite inadmissible, and that Great Britain could not possibly accept "any measure short of a direct and unqualified satisfaction for the insult." Spain of course would refuse, and therefore war must follow: it could not be avoided without disgrace to one side or the other.[1] This rigid attitude prepares us for the part which the Duke played in the dispute with Russia nine months later.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 29475.

In this case Pitt agreed with him, apparently because the point at issue concerned our interests and our honour far more nearly. Indeed the tone of the Spanish replies left small hope of peace. Count Floridablanca protested against the British demand that full reparation must be made to the victims of Captain Martinez, before the Spanish claims could be considered. "The Spanish Minister," wrote Merry from Madrid on 24th May, "is persuaded that we have at all events taken the resolution of breaking with this country.... Our tone of language to this Court he represents as insufferable, and while on his part he still wishes to preserve peace, he seems to think that Spain will unavoidably be driven to the necessity of defending herself." Spain, he adds, was arming twenty-five warships, and had already two squadrons at sea.[2]

Her pretensions appear in the despatch of the Spanish Governor of Mexico, dated Mexico, 11th May 1790. After stating that he had released the "Argonaut" and "Princess Royal" in order to maintain harmony with England, he remarked that Martinez had "acted agreeably to the laws and royal ordinances, which not only absolutely prohibit any kind of navigation, establishment, or commerce of foreigners on our South Sea Coasts of both Americas, but moreover strictly command they be looked upon as declared enemies, without considering such treatment a breach of national faith or contravention of the treaties of peace." Whence it followed that Martinez might with impunity have hanged Meares, Colnett, and their crews on his yardarms. These claims were thus endorsed in the Spanish circular note of 4th June, which based them on the Treaty of Utrecht (1713):

> It also appears that, in spite of the attempts of some adventurers and pirates of various nations on the Spanish coasts of the said South Sea and the adjacent islands, Spain has continued her possession, recovering what has been endeavoured to be usurped from her, and performing for this purpose the necessary reconnoitres and voyages, by the means of which and of repeated acts she has preserved her dominion, of which she has always established and left signs, which reach to places the nearest to the Russian establishments in that part of the world.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

[2] "F. O.," Spain, 17.

The efforts which the Court of Madrid then put forth at St. Petersburg and Vienna showed its resolve to concert a league against England in which Denmark was to be included. This scheme, as visionary as the grandiose dreams of Alberoni, caused our Ministers some concern, until they found that their Allies, Prussia and Holland, were resolved to support them. On 20th May Hertzberg assured Ewart, that Prussia would fulfil her engagements, if Spain pushed matters to extremes.[1]

Nevertheless, for a time everything portended war. Fitzherbert, after reaching Aranjuez on 10th June, became convinced that Floridablanca, for all his peaceful assurances, intended to force a rupture at the first favourable opportunity. The Spanish Court absolutely refused to grant satisfaction for the injury done to Meares and Colnett, because that would imply the right of British subjects to be at Nootka.[2] For the very same reason the Pitt Cabinet pressed its preliminary demand. It also brushed aside the Spanish pretensions of sole sovereignty on the Nootka coasts, because British and other seamen had for some little time traded there—an assertion difficult to maintain.[3]

The deadlock was therefore complete; and, if Spain could have looked forward to help either from France, Russia, or Austria, war would inevitably have ensued. It is of interest to observe that, as the crisis became acute, Pitt adopted his usual habit of writing the drafts of the most important despatches; and they were sent off without alteration. He thus disposed of the suggestion of Floridablanca, that the whole matter in dispute should be settled by arbitration. "Your Excellency will not be surprised that they are such as cannot be adopted. The idea of an arbitration upon a subject of this nature must be entirely out of the question; and a reservation such as that contained in the second proposal would render the satisfaction nugatory, as it would refer to subsequent discussion the very ground on which that satisfaction is demanded."[1]

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[1] "Dropmore P.," i, 585, 588. Auckland to Grenville, 15th May and 8th June 1790. On 22nd May Kaunitz, the Austrian Chancellor, assured Keith, our ambassador, that he heartily wished for the settlement of the Nootka Sound dispute. He blamed Floridablanca as rash ("F. O.," Austria, 20).

[2] "F. O.," Spain, 17. Fitzherbert to Leeds, 16th June 1790. Earl Camden, a valued member of the Cabinet, wrote on 29th June to Pitt expressing grave concern at this answer from the Spanish Court. He added these words: "War, as I always thought, was inevitable, and to temporize impossible. The jealousy of that Court gave the first provocation, and their pride refuses satisfaction. The consequence is evident. We have no choice, for the outrage at Nouska [*sic*] cannot be a subject of discussion. I trust in the spirit of the Kingdom and your own wisdom and good fortune, and have no doubt this will terminate to your honour" (Pitt MSS., 119).

[3] "F. O.," Spain, 18. Leeds to Fitzherbert, 5th July.

The outlook was not brightened by the suggestion of Floridablanca, that Spain should keep the whole of the coast from California up to and including Nootka; that from that inlet northwards to 61°, British and Spaniards should have conjointly the right of trading and forming establishments; and that British sailors should enjoy certain fishery rights in the South Sea on uninhabited islands far removed from Spanish settlements.[2] These proposals seemed, as they doubtless were, a device to gain time until France, Austria, or Russia could step forth and help Spain; and Pitt refused to admit these "chimerical claims of exclusive sovereignty over the American Continent and the seas adjacent," which were to Spain herself "rather matter of useless pride than of actual advantage."[3] Towards the end of July more peaceful counsels prevailed at Madrid, probably because the weak and luxurious King, Charles IV, disliked war, and dreaded contact with Revolutionary France. Further it must have transpired that Russia and Austria, owing to their war with Turkey, were not likely to give more than good wishes to Spain. Either for these reasons, or because he hoped that delay would tell in favour of Spain, Floridablanca signed with Fitzherbert on 24th July a Declaration that Spain would give satisfaction for the seizure of British vessels and their cargoes at Nootka. On 5th August Grenville informed the King of this auspicious turn of affairs.[4]

But now, while the Court of Madrid abated its pretensions, French patriots began to rattle the sword in the scabbard. For reasons which are hard to fathom, the Spanish request for armed assistance, which reached Paris on 16th June, was not presented to the National Assembly until 2nd August. On that day Montmorin informed the deputies of the continuance of naval preparations in England, and declared that, unless French aid were accorded to Spain, she would seek an ally elsewhere. The statement was well calculated to awaken jealousy of England; and members came to the conclusion that the islanders were seeking, in the temporary weakness of France, to bully the Court of Madrid out of its just rights. Consequently the whole matter was referred to the newly appointed Diplomatic Committee which supervised the work of the Foreign Office.[1] As this body now practically controlled French diplomacy, everything became uncertain; and it is not surprising that Pitt and Leeds declined to disarm now that the question of peace or war depended on an emotional Assembly and its delegates.

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 18. Despatch of 5th July to Fitzherbert. Of course, this does not imply that Pitt would never admit arbitration, but only that he judged it inadmissible in the present case.

[2] *Ibid.* Fitzherbert to Leeds, 12th July.

[3] *Ibid.* Leeds to Fitzherbert, 17th August.

[4] Manning, 405, 406; "Dropmore P.," i, 603, 606.

At the head of this new controlling body was Mirabeau. As Reporter of the Committee he held a commanding position, which was enhanced by his splendid eloquence, forceful personality, and knowledge of the shady by-paths of diplomacy. The Report which he presented to the Assembly on 25th August was, in effect, his. While minimizing the importance of the Nootka dispute, scoffing at the old diplomacy, and declaring that Europe would not need any diplomacy when there were neither despots nor slaves, he yet proposed that, pending the advent of that glorious age, France must not abrogate her treaties but continue to respect them until they had been subjected to revision. Further, in place of the Family Compact of the Kings of France and Spain, he proposed to substitute a National Compact, based on the needs of the two nations. On the following day he continued his speech and moved that France and Spain should form a national treaty in the interests of peace and conformable to "the principles of justice which will ever form the policy of the French." What was far more significant, he himself added a rider for the immediate armament of forty-five sail of the line and a proportionate number of smaller vessels. This was carried immediately.[2]

Seeing that the Assembly passed this vote at the very time when the terrible mutiny at Nancy was at its height, the feelings of the deputies must have been of the bellicose order which Mirabeau had previously deprecated. Despite the pressing need for peace, France seemed to be heading straight for war. On ordinary grounds her conduct is inexplicable. Everywhere her troops were clamouring for arrears of pay; her sailors could scarcely be kept together; and the virtual bankruptcy of the State was a week later to be quaintly revealed by the flight of Necker to Switzerland. The King and his Ministers disapproved the arming of so large a fleet; for Montmorin confessed to Gower his surprise and regret, adding the comforting assurance that it would be done as slowly as possible. The mystery deepens when we know that Floridablanca continued to speak in peaceful tones. On 19th August he admitted to Fitzherbert that he desired help from Russia and Austria, but felt complete indifference as to what France might do. Aid from her, he said, would lead to the introduction of democratic principles, which he was determined to keep out, if need arose, by a cordon along the frontier, as one would exclude the plague.[1]

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[1] "Despatches of Earl Gower (1790-1792)," 23, edited by Mr. Oscar Browning. Gower succeeded Dorset as ambassador at Paris on 20th June 1790.

[2] "Travaux de Mirabeau," iv, 24-49, which shows that this was not the work of the Assembly, but the proposal of Mirabeau. W. A. Miles reported ("Corresp.," i, 255), that Mirabeau received from the Spanish ambassador one thousand *louis d'or* for carrying this proposal.

Here probably we have the key to the enigma. The recent action of Mirabeau (for the arming of the French naval force was his proposal, not Montmorin's) rested on the assumption that Spain did not mean to draw the sword. His agents at the various Courts kept him well abreast of events, and doubtless he foresaw that Charles IV's hatred of democracy would bar the way to an alliance of the two peoples such as was now projected. Why, then, should Mirabeau have threatened England with war? His reasons seem to have been partly of a patriotic, partly of a private, nature. He desired to restore the prestige of the French monarchy by throwing its sword into the wavering balances of diplomacy. As to the expense, it was justifiable, if it tended to revive the national spirit and to quell the mutinous feelings of the sailors. Work, especially if directed against "the natural enemy," would be the best restorative of order at the dockyards, and prevent the deterioration of the navy. But apart from these motives Mirabeau may have been swayed by others of a lower kind. His popularity had swiftly waned during the previous debates. He might revive it by pandering to the dislike of England now widely prevalent. Manufacturers who suffered by English competition and Chauvinists who dreaded her supremacy at sea were joining in a hue and cry against Pitt;[1] and Mirabeau gained credit by posing as the national champion. Further, by holding peace and war, as it were, in the folds of his toga, he enhanced his value in the diplomatic market. His corruptibility was notorious. Even the sums which he drew from the King were far from meeting the yawning gulf of his debts.

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 18. Fitzherbert to Leeds, 17th August.

In the present case there was much to tempt him to political auctioneering. There were present in Paris two political agents to whom Pitt had confided the task of humouring the French democrats and dissolving the Family Compact. These were William Augustus Miles and Hugh Elliot. The former was a clever but opinionated man, half statesman, half busy-body, capable of doing good work when kept well in hand, but apt to take the bit into his teeth and bolt. He had already looked into the affairs of Brabant, Liége, and Frankfurt for Pitt; and as early as 4th March the Prime Minister summoned him to Downing Street for the purpose of sending him to Paris; but not till the middle of July did he finally entrust to him the task of inducing French deputies to annul the Family Compact. That this was to be done secretly appears from the order that he was to have no dealings whatever with the British Embassy.[2] Unfortunately the letters which passed between Pitt and Miles at this time have all been destroyed.[3] But we know from other sources that Miles was charged to prepare the way for an Anglo-French *entente*. He certainly made overtures to Talleyrand, Mirabeau, and Lafayette; he was also elected a member of the Jacobins Club, and worked hard to remove the prejudices against England. These he found exceedingly strong, all the troubles in the fleet being ascribed to her. By 11th October he had fulfilled his mission, and informed George Rose that Pitt might, if he chose, form a close working alliance with the French nation. About the same time he conceived for Mirabeau the greatest contempt, and asserted that it was "impossible to know him and not to despise him."[1]

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[1] "Gower's Despatches," 29; "Corresp. of W. A. Miles," i, 162, 163.

[2] *Ibid.*, i, 41-8, 150.

[3] In the Pitt MSS. there is a packet (No. 159) of Miles's letters to Pitt, beginning with 1785. On 13th May 1790 Miles wrote to Pitt that George Rose had informed him he could not see how Pitt could employ him. Miles begged Pitt for a pension as a literary man. There is no other letter to Pitt until 10th December 1790, dated Paris:—"My attachment to your interest and a sincere desire to give every possible support to your Administration induced me to engage without difficulty in the enterprise proposed by Mr. Rose, and to accept of a salary inadequate to the expenses of the most frugal establishment," viz., £400 a year. He adds that he has trenched on his private property, and concludes by asking for the consulate at Ostend.

Elliot was a man of far higher stamp than Miles. As we have seen, he had had a distinguished diplomatic career, and might be termed the saviour of Gustavus III in the acute crisis of 1788 He was brother of Sir Gilbert Elliot (first Earl of Minto), and of Lady Auckland. In the summer of 1790 he was home on furlough. On 7th August he wrote from Beckenham, Auckland's residence, congratulating Pitt on a favourable turn in the Spanish dispute. When the outlook once more darkened he requested leave to go to Paris in order to use his influence with his friend, Mirabeau, in the interests of peace. Pitt must have referred the proposal to the King, and received a very guarded reply, dated Windsor, 26th October. George enjoined great caution, as we had hitherto held entirely aloof from the French troubles, and must on no account be mixed up in them. Yet, for the sake of peace, he did not object to this attempt, so long as it was entirely unofficial; but he was "not sanguine that Mr. H. Elliot and his French friend" would succeed where so much caution and delicacy were necessary.[2]

As this affair is wrapped in mystery, and concerns not only the peace of the world, but also that most interesting personality, Mirabeau, the draft of an undated letter of Pitt to the King must be quoted in full:

> Mr. P. takes the liberty of submitting to your Majesty's Perusal two private letters which he received to-day from Paris, one from Lord Gower, and the other from Mr. H. Elliot. The latter went thither a short time since, principally from curiosity, but previous to his departure, mentioned to Mr. P. that he had formerly happened to be in habits of much intimacy with M. de Mirabeau, and might probably have an opportunity of learning something from him respecting the views of the prevailing party in France on the subject of the discussions with Spain. Mr. P. recommends to him to be very cautious not to commit anybody by his conversation, but to endeavour to find out whether there was

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[1] "Corresp. of W. A. Miles," i, 171, 172, 199.

[2] "Beaufort P.," etc. (Hist. MSS. Comm.), 368.

> any chance of making them see in a just light the nature of our disputes with Spain, and of thereby preventing or delaying their taking a part in the war, if it should take place.
>
> The suggestions in Mr. Elliot's letter seem to furnish matter for much consideration; possibly there may be found means of improving this opening to some advantage with a view to preserving or restoring peace, or to retarding the succours which France might furnish to Spain.[1]

This letter is undated. George III's missive of 26th October seems to be a reply to it or to one very like it. But Pitt's letter implies the receipt of Gower's and Elliot's despatches of 26th October. I have found no other despatch from Gower enclosing one from Elliot except of that date. Four days previously Gower had written to Pitt:

> Mr. Elliot's communication with Mr. de Mirabeau has been more successful than I imagined it was likely to be: it has procured an easy means of maintaining a good understanding between His Majesty's Ministers and the prevailing party in the National Assembly, if such a correspondence should be found necessary.[2]

In the letter of 26th October Gower informed Pitt:

> Mr. Elliot has brought the prevailing party in this country to act according to their true interest; and, if they meet with proper encouragement from you, they seem ready to go any lengths towards enforcing our claims with regard to Spain; and they are, I believe, sincere in their desire to promote a real and effectual good understanding between the two countries. I shall be extremely happy to co-operate with Mr. Elliot in a negotiation which appears to me so desirable.[3]

The words "proper encouragement" *donnent furieusement à penser*. Elliot in a long letter of 26th October, recounted his interview with a deputation from the Diplomatic Committee, and his success in winning it over to the British side. In the former of two paragraphs, which are omitted by Earl Stanhope,[4] Elliot describes the promise given him by the Committee, that, even if Spain went to war, and formally demanded the aid of France, such aid would not be forthcoming until the British case had been fully investigated. The second of the two passages deserves quotation in full. It occurs near the end of the letter:

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[1] Pitt MSS., 335.

[2] *Ibid.*, 139. See, too, "Gower's Despatches," 38, 39, with note.

[3] Pitt MSS., 139.

[4] Stanhope, ii, 60, 61.

> What has taken place in my more intimate conversations with individuals cannot be committed to paper. But I have every reason to believe that I am more master of the secret springs of action here than anybody else could have been. Everything I have either said or done has always been previously concerted and has ever answered my most sanguine expectations. . . . I am inclined to believe that, after the disturbances at Brest are known at Madrid, the Spaniards will make peace rather than expose their fleets to any junction with French ships.[1]

The hints here given imply that Mirabeau, and probably other patriots as well, accepted British money, but both our envoys were discreet enough to give few details in writing. It is quite probable that Mirabeau first accepted Spanish gold for procuring the vote for the arming of forty-five French sail of the line, and then accepted an equivalent sum from Miles or Elliot for the decree which rendered that step innocuous. His control over the Assembly was scarcely less than Montmorin's;[2] and that nervous Minister would certainly welcome a course of action which enhanced the prestige of France, and yet averted all risk of war. Nevertheless, Pitt did not set much store by the help of Mirabeau. He decided to bring the whole dispute to an immediate issue, without waiting for the issue of the golden proposals of Elliot and Miles. Possibly he heard from other sources that France would do no more than rattle the sword in the scabbard; or else he was emboldened by the marked success and zeal attending the British naval preparations, the mutinies in the French fleet, the readiness of our Allies to play their part, and the unreadiness of Spain. A brief survey of these considerations will reveal the grounds of his confidence.

The chance of hostilities with the two Bourbon Courts was threatening enough to call forth all the energies of the race. Through the months of August, September, and October naval preparations went on with the utmost vigour. Officers and men vied with one another in zeal to equip and man the ships with all possible speed and thoroughness. Sir John Jervis afterwards assured the House of Commons that he had seen captains paying out their own money by hundreds of pounds in order to expedite the equipment; others sailed their ships down Channel with mere skeleton crews in order to hasten the rally at Plymouth; and by dint of drills from sunrise to sunset the crews were hardened to their work.[1] In truth, the dominant fact of the situation was England's overwhelming supremacy at sea over Spain, and possibly over Spain and France together.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 139.

[2] F. Masson, "Département des Affaires étrangères," 86 *et seq.*

In the Pretyman MSS. is an undated letter of Elliot to Pitt (probably of November 1790) referring to his interview with Pitt that morning, and explaining that his phrase to the Diplomatic Committee, "the glorious Revolution," was meant only for Frenchmen!

The Triple Alliance also proved to be a reality. The prospect of a war with Spain was, of course, distasteful both at Berlin and The Hague; but our Allies admitted that Spain was the aggressor, and signified their readiness to support us. This should be noted, for it imposed on Pitt a debt of honour to support Prussia when her summons for help against the Czarina arrived at Whitehall in the month of March following.

Further, the ambitions of the Czarina already threatened the equilibrium of Europe; and in this fact we find the last, and perhaps the most cogent, of the reasons why Pitt and his colleague resolved to have done with the Spanish dispute before the Eastern Question came to a crisis. This appears very clearly in Leeds' despatch of 2nd October to our ambassador at Madrid, which was in effect an ultimatum to that Court. He warned Fitzherbert that the Spanish proposals were quite inadmissible, and that "neither the circumstances of the negotiation, nor the relative situation of the two countries and of other Powers in Europe can allow of any further delay"; he therefore pressed for the immediate acceptance of the British demands. An explanatory note accompanied the ultimatum, stating that Spain ought to desire the preservation of the existing system in Europe, which was threatened solely by the Empress Catharine, who spurned the counsels of moderation offered by the Allies.[2]

It appears, then, that the threatening aspect of affairs in the East in part accounts for Pitt's sudden and imperious demand. He resolved to finish with Spain so as to have his hands free for the Eastern Question. As appeared in an earlier chapter, the Czarina, Catharine II, had recently concluded peace with Sweden; and, despite the promised negotiations of the Viennese Court for peace with the Turks, she seemed determined to press them hard, and to wring from them a district then deemed necessary to the defence of the Ottoman Power. Her dalliance

[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 907.

[2] "F. O.," Spain, 19.

with Spain was far from serious; but she might, if allowed time, concert a formidable league against England. The voice of prudence, therefore, counselled the immediate coercion of Spain, while Russia was entangled in a still doubtful strife. Machiavelli shrewdly remarked that "the Romans never swallowed an injury to put off a war; for they knew that war was not avoided but only deferred thereby, and commonly with advantage to the enemy."[1]

But Pitt needed not to go to Machiavelli. Facts spoke more convincingly than words to a nature like his; and the news from Paris and Madrid called aloud for a display of energy. The insubordination at the French dockyards and the news from Paris had told on the nervous and pedantic King of Spain. On 16th September Fitzherbert wrote to the Duke of Leeds that that monarch had very decidedly expressed his resolve never to have an alliance with France on the basis of a National Compact as proposed by Mirabeau. It appears, then, that the great orator had a decisive effect in working on the fears and scruples of His Catholic Majesty, and thus assuring the isolation of Spain. If Mirabeau received British money from Miles and Elliot a month or so later, he might claim it as payment for valuable services already rendered. However that may be, it is certain that Pitt, on receiving the glad news from Fitzherbert on 27th September, decided to take vigorous action. Fitzherbert advised tact and patience in dealing with that proud Court; but Pitt and Leeds waived aside the advice and resolved to thrust their adversary into a corner. In view of the more complaisant attitude of the Spanish Government, their action was unchivalrous; but it was justified by the tidings which had arrived of cruelties perpetrated by a Spanish warship on the captain of a English merchantman in the Gulf of Florida, who was set in the bilboes in the blazing sun.[2] Public opinion would certainly have supported Pitt in case of a rupture with an enemy whose claims and customs were still those of the fifteenth century; and he was resolved to end the dominion of Spain in the North Pacific with as little ceremony as Cromwell had shown in his expedition against Jamaica in 1654.

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[1] Machiavelli, "The Prince," ch. iii.

[2] McDonald's affidavit of 25th September 1790. On this case Bland Burges wrote to Auckland on 30th September (B.M. Add. MSS., 34433) that he was convinced of its authenticity, and that Spain was clearly seeking a quarrel with us. He referred to the signature of the Reichenbach Convention as strengthening our position. On 21st September he wrote to Auckland of the "intolerable suspense" of the Spanish affair, and hinted that Spanish gold had probably bought the recent peace between Sweden and Russia. The position of Bland Burges as permanent secretary at the Foreign Office gives weight to these remarks.

Now there was little fear of war. The pride of Charles IV centred in trophies of the chase; and his weak and slothful nature revolted at the thought of an alliance with France on Mirabeau's terms. Moreover, Russia and Austria had paid little heed to the recent appeals of Floridablanca, and there was war with the Moors outside Tangier. Was not this enough? For a few days the Council of Ministers breathed threats of war. Floridablanca struggled hard against the relentless grip which had closed around him. But he was helpless, and he knew it. Therefore on Sunday, 24th October, the Spanish Minister, after much angry remonstrance, gave way, and agreed to the British terms.

Meanwhile, Pitt had allowed Fitzherbert to recede slightly on some of the conditions, and urged that Spain should be invited to frame an alliance with us, both political and commercial. As usual, in affairs of great moment, he himself wrote the draft of this despatch, which was sent off without alteration.[1] This skilful angling was of no avail. Spanish pride was too deeply wounded to admit of any possibility ot alliance, whether political or commercial, for many years to come. In other respects Pitt gained his point; and the following letter to Bishop Pretyman (Tomline) shows his relief at the end to the long strain:

Thursday, *Nov.* 4, 1790.[2]

DEAR BISHOP,

The decisive answer arrived this morning and is perfectly satisfactory. The Spanish Minister at last agreed, on the 24th of October, to a *projet* of a Convention containing all we wish, and it was settled that it should be actually signed in three days from that time. The terms will be found to secure all that we could demand in justice, or had any reason to desire.

Accordingly, on 28th October 1790 (after four days, not three), the Court of Madrid signed the Convention which opened up a new future for the North Pacific. By it Spain agreed to restore the buildings and lands at Nootka to the British subjects whom Martinez had dispossessed. Reparation was also to be made for any outrages committed by the subjects of either Power against those of the other since April 1789.[1] Britons and Spaniards were to have full liberty to trade in North-West America, that is, to the north of the Spanish settlements; but of course all the coasts to the south of them were to remain closed as heretofore. Spain, however, conceded entire freedom of navigation and fishery in the Pacific Ocean and the South Seas, except that, in order to preclude all intercourse with her colonies, British ships were forbidden to approach within a limit of ten maritime leagues.

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 19. Despatch of 8th October. For details see Manning, *op. cit.*, chs. xi-xiii. I cannot, however, agree with Dr. Manning's assertion (p. 440) that it looks as if Pitt and Leeds desired war. The terms of Fitzherbert's despatch of 16th September, which Dr. Manning does not notice, surely convinced Pitt that Spain would on no account use the French alliance on Mirabeau's conditions.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

The British public greeted this happy issue of events with characteristic reserve. As Spain stood for commercial monopoly and political reaction, the rebuff dealt to her ought to have pleased the Whigs. But party rancour increased in proportion to Pitt's success. Hope deferred made the hearts of his opponents sick; and to this cause we may attribute curiously acrid verdicts like that of Auckland's correspondent, Storer, who exclaimed on 22nd October, with the jauntiness of ignorance: "Here we are, going to war, and for what? A place, the name of which I can scarcely pronounce, never heard of till lately, and which did not exist till t'other day. Pitt is tired of peace. He bullied France so effectually three years ago that he is determined to try the same thing with Spain." Storer also says that our officers were in high spirits at the idea of a voyage to *Mexico*, and were buying Ulloa's "Voyage" so as to study the *South Sea* coasts.[2] Whence it would appear that geography was not a strong point with Storer, and that in his eyes wars were worth waging only on behalf of well-known names. How curiously parochial is this habit of mind. Yet Pitt was destined soon to find out its self-assertiveness and tenacity in the case of another un-euphonious and dimly-known place—Oczakoff.

The insular, matter-of-fact way in which the House of Commons viewed Pitt's diplomatic triumph received apt illustration in the debate of 14th December, when Duncombe and Alderman Watson moved and seconded a resolution of thanks to His Majesty for the Convention with Spain. They dwelt on the advantages of the peaceful settlement which it secured, and augured well for the increase of British trade to the South Seas. But Pulteney declared that we had won too much from Spain, and should ever feel her ill will. Besides, a Pacific whale was worth only £90, as against £170 for a Greenland whale. Alderman Curtis fell foul of these statements in a maiden speech "which possessed all the blunt characteristics of commercial oratory." He said that he himself was a fisherman, and gloried in the character. He rejoiced to state that more ships than ever before were now fitting out for whaling in the Pacific; and he himself had sold Pacific whale-oil for £50 a ton, while the Greenland oil fetched only £18 or £19 a ton. Mr. (afterwards Earl) Grey sought to raise the debate from these blubbery platitudes to the levels of diplomacy; and, differing from his friend Pulteney, censured the Convention because it gained us nothing; for it laid down no definite limits in those new lands, and it granted us access to them conjointly with the Spaniards. Consequently, where our traders settled on one hill, the Spaniards might build a fort on another close by. Windham then censured Ministers because they had secured neither adequate reparation to our outraged honour nor definite rights to our traders. Thereupon a General Smith opined that the Convention was of no advantage to us, because the people of Nootka Sound were "a species of cannibals." In other respects it was "disgraceful to the real interests of the country"—an assertion which Rolle and Ryder proceeded to refute, on the ground that the result had been well worth the three and a half millions spent on naval preparations. (In reality the sum was £2,821,000.)

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 49 (Drafts of Lord Grenville), shows that the sum of £50,000 was finally demanded from Spain as compensation. For the Convention of 28th October 1790 see "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 916-18, and Martens, iv, 492-9.

[2] "Auckland Journals," ii, 374.

Fox also wandered deviously until he caught at a possible clue, that offended honour was the only justifiable cause for war. In this case, he declared, Ministers had not gained for us due reparation. It fell infinitely short of what was obtained in the dispute about the Falkland Islands in 1771.[1] Further, we now gained no material advantage from Spain; for British ships had sailed into the South Seas despite the Spanish laws; and the receipts from that trade had grown in five years from £12,000 to £97,000. (He omitted to state that previously that trade had been killed by the war with Spain.) He next asserted that we secured little or nothing in the North Pacific, because the limits of Spanish America were still left vague, and we gave up the right of settlement on the coasts of South America. In fact, the treaty was one of concessions, not of acquisitions. This, he added, was on a par with our foreign policy as a whole; for our new ally, Sweden, had come to terms with Russia behind our backs, thus lowering us in the eyes of the world; and we had failed to coerce Russia. "In our words was confidence: in our acts was fear."

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[1] For this see Hertz, "British Imperialism in the XVIIIth Century."

Pitt in his reply had little difficulty in proving that the present case differed entirely from that of the Falkland Islands, and that the treaty secured for us trading rights which Spain had hitherto always contested. There was therefore every ground for hoping for a great increase of trade to the Pacific. The House agreed with him by 247 votes to 123. But in Pitt's speech, as in the whole debate, we find no wide outlook on events. The arguments are of the Little Peddlington type; and, after wandering through those teasing mazes, one feels a thrill of surprise that the British people ever came out into a large and wealthy place. The importance of Pitt's triumph has received scant notice at the hands of historians. Macaulay, in his brilliant sketch of Pitt's career, dismissed the affair in the clause—"England armed, and Spain receded." Lord Rosebery remarks that the settlement of the affair was honourable for England, and not dishonourable to Spain. Even Stanhope and Lecky on their far ampler canvases merely described the terms of the settlement without revealing its momentous results.[1]

Far different were the judgements of enlightened Spaniards. They saw in the treaty of 28th October the beginning of the end of their world-empire. The official Junta at Madrid protested vehemently against the surrender on the ground that it "conceded to England what has always been resisted and refused to all Powers since the discovery of the Indies." Herein lies the significance of the Spanish defeat. Their Empire rested on monopoly. It is little to the point to say that English traders occasionally ventured into the Pacific. They did so at their peril; and the recent revival of Spanish power threatened to rivet once more the chains of privilege on that vast domain.

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[1] Stanhope, ii, 63; Lecky, v, 209; Lord Rosebery, "Pitt," 102; Mr. C. Whibley, "Pitt," 129.

Now that they were shattered, the whole cramped system was doomed to fall. Just as the irruption of Cromwell's fleet into the Spanish West Indies in 1654 sounded the knell of Spanish domination in those seas, so too the signing of this Convention presaged the end of their Empire in the Pacific. The advent of the Union Jack on equal terms with the red and yellow flag of Spain has always implied the retreat of the latter. In religion, commerce, and political life the two ensigns represent ideals so utterly at variance that they cannot wave in friendly neighbourhood. One or other must go: and the primacy of Pitt and Godoy sufficiently explains the advance of the one and the retreat of the other in the ensuing years. In one other respect the crisis was important. The British archives show that the Courts of Madrid and St. Petersburg were then making overtures which would probably have led to the complete appropriation of that coast-line; and the interlocking of those two rigid systems might have implied the exclusion for ever of the British flag from the Pacific coast. No one, not even Pitt himself, could foresee the rich harvest of results one day to be reaped from his action in that summer and autumn. The winning of a few log huts at Nootka Sound seemed a small thing then. But in this age of the triumphs of steam and electricity we can discern its importance in world politics. The infant settlement on Vancouver Island, and on the mainland opposite, inspired the pioneers of Canada with hope as they threaded their way through the passes of the Rockies and the Selkirks. Possibly one of them

> like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific,

caught a glimpse of a strange future, when Canada, the child of Richelieu, would enter into the northern heritage of old Spain, and become a Pacific Power.

All this lay enfolded in the winning of that inlet. Nay, more. We can now see that British Columbia holds in the West a strategic position not unlike that of Egypt in the Orient. Both are vital links in our chain of communication. Pitt, could he have known it, helped to fashion the keystone of the arch of Empire in the Occident. He played his part manfully in preparing for a day when Canada would stretch hands across the seas to India and Australia; when the vivifying forces of science and commerce would endow with a common life the conquests of Wolfe and Clive, and the lands discovered by Captain Cook.

CHAPTER XXVI

PITT AND CATHARINE II

> Beware
> Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
> Bear 't that the opposed may beware of thee.
>
> SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet.*

UP to the spring of the year 1791 Pitt had achieved a series of remarkable triumphs in his foreign policy. After lifting his country from the depths of penury and isolation, he seized favourable opportunities for checkmating French influence in Holland, and framing the Triple Alliance with that Republic and the Kingdom of Prussia. During the years 1788-90 this alliance gave the law to Europe. It rescued Gustavus III from ruin; it prescribed terms to Austria at the Conference of Reichenbach, and thereby saved the Turks from the gravest danger; it served to restore the ancient liberties of the Brabanters and Flemings; it enabled England to overawe Spain and win the coast of the present colony of British Columbia; last, but not least, Pitt, by singular skill, thwarted the dangerous schemes of the Prussian statesman Hertzberg at the expense of Poland.

Successes like these are apt to beget feelings of jealousy or fear; for gratitude rarely figures among the motives that determine the course of national policy. Certainly this is the case in the story now before us, which tells of a rebuff dealt to Pitt, the unweaving of his plans for the equitable pacification of Europe, and the formation of new groupings which leave Great Britain isolated and her statesmen discredited. The importance of the crisis, and the light which it throws on the peace-loving character of Pitt, warrant a closer examination of details than has yet been given to the subject. We must remember that at every emergency the British Foreign Office was directed by Pitt, not by its chief, the Duke of Leeds. This appears in a sentence of Ewart's letter of 28th November 1790 to Lord Auckland—"I trust Mr. Pitt will write to your lordship himself in a satisfactory manner; and you know better than I do of what consequence the opinions of others are." The imperious Minister was now to encounter a will as tough, and a pride as exacting, as his own. Catharine of Russia stood in his path, and defied him to apply to her his scheme of pacification, to which Leopold of Austria had yielded grudging assent.

There were several reasons why Pitt should expect from the Czarina a similar acquiescence. Her finances were utterly exhausted by four years of war. Her favourite, Prince Potemkin, had won victories; but he and his dependents had battened on the Treasury, and her triumph heralded the approach of bankruptcy. The plague was devastating her armies in the south; and even Russia seemed unable to endure the waste of another campaign. The Muscovites placed their hopes in a dash of their fleet on Constantinople; but how could that be effected if England sent a strong squadron into the Black Sea to help the Turks? And while she screened the Moslem capital, the presence of her warships in the Baltic must complete the ruin of the Baltic provinces. Two fifths of their exports by sea went to Great Britain; and they drew thence goods worth 7,308,000 roubles as against 2,278,000 from all other lands.[1] The internal state of Russia also gave cause for concern. The extravagance and licentiousness of the Court, flaunted in face of struggling traders and half-starved peasants, were a perpetual challenge to discontent; and the best informed observers believed that, if Prussia and England held firm, the Empress must humble her pride and accept their terms. They were by no means extravagant. Russia was to give up the conquests of the present war, particularly the lands east of the Pruth, which were virtually in her hands; but she might retain the Crimea—the object for which the Sultan had cast down the gauntlet.

At the very time when the British demands were nearing the banks of the Neva, victory crowned the efforts of the Russians on the Lower Danube. Ismail, the stronghold which commanded the only available entrance into Turkey, now that the Austro-Turkish armistice kept Wallachia neutral, fell before the prowess of the assailants (22nd December 1790). After some successes against the Turkish flotilla and the batteries fringing the river banks, Potemkin began the siege of the city itself; but its deep fosse, fed from the Danube, and its double line of ramparts defied all his efforts. Then he bent his pride and sent for Suvóroff. The advent of "the little father" put new heart into the 31,000 besiegers.—"To-day for prayer: to-morrow for drill: the next day victory or a glorious death."—By these words, and by the contagion of his enthusiasm, he worked his men up to a pitch of fury. Skill came to reinforce their fanaticism. By night a strong flotilla dropped down stream to assail the town on that side, while on the other six columns advanced stealthily against the walls. A sharp frost favoured the enterprise; and under cover of a misty dawn the assailants rushed forward at all possible points. The defenders met fury with fury. A long day of carnage ensued, the Moslems, men and women alike, fighting desperately for creed, country, life, and honour. At last Suvóroff's reserves gained a foothold and overwhelmed the exhausted garrison. Then ensued a night of slaughter, plunder, and outrage. Some 30,000 Turks perished. The consequences of this victory were great. The hold of the Sultan on the Danube was loosened, while the Russians prepared to deal a blow at the heart of the Ottoman dominions. Thus, once again, the personality of Suvóroff proved to be worth an army. Indeed, it changed the course of history. For now, when the proud Empress held the keys of the Danube, how could she consent to give back to the infidels Suvóroff's former conquest, Oczakoff? Diplomacy also furthered the aims of Catharine, and told against those of Pitt. Much depended on the good faith of Leopold II in keeping his promises to the Triple Alliance, pledged at the Conference of Reichenbach in July 1790. He had agreed to accept the *status quo ante bellum* as a basis of settlement for his disputes with the Belgians and for his war with Turkey. Now, nothing ought to have been simpler than the restoration of his conquests to the Porte, provided that the plenipotentiaries of the Powers, who met at Sistova late in 1790 to reduce them to treaty form, were inspired by good faith and pacific desires.

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[1] "F. O.," Russia, 20. Trade Report of the Baltic ports for 1790.

But distrust and intrigue soon enveloped in mystery phrases that were clear as day. The Turks opposed to the superior force of Austria all the chicanery of oriental delays. Their astrologers discovered that very many days were unsuitable for the conduct of business; and their envoys often fell ill. Hopes ran high at the Porte that England and Prussia would draw the sword against the Czarina. The Emperor Leopold and his equally wily Chancellor, Prince Kaunitz, also saw in delay an opportunity of wriggling out from the engagements so reluctantly made at Reichenbach.[1] Scarcely was the ink of that compact dry before Kaunitz bemoaned to his envoy in London the lack of any conquests at the end of "a ruinously expensive war." This magnanimity he ascribed to his desire to be again on good terms with England, despite her unjust treatment of a once valued ally. After these crocodile tears there came the significant suggestion—Would not England instruct her envoy to deal leniently with Austria in the ensuing negotiations with the Turks, and allow her to gain a few little advantages?[2] Leopold also wrote to his offended ally, Catharine, assuring her that he would never really make peace with the Turks until she had secured from them conquests proportionate to the successes of her troops. Let Austria and Russia keep in close touch and form an eternal compact.[3] Here, then, we probe one of the causes of the defiant rejection by Catharine of Pitt's demand for the *status quo.* He believed, and very naturally, that the Austro-Russian alliance was wholly severed; while, in point of fact, Austria was secretly, but effectively, playing the game of her late ally.[4]

But there was another cause of his failure. The Semiramis of the North could at need abase her pride and clasp the hand of a hated foe. As we have seen, she had grasped that of Gustavus III; but only for the most potent of reasons. She saw in that vain and impulsive sovereign a convenient tool, who might serve her well in case of a British naval demonstration against Cronstadt. For some time the Swedish monarch held back his hand. Auckland wrote early in November 1790 that Gustavus either from vanity or from penury, might once more attack her; but the price which he asked from the Allies was enormous:

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[1] "Mems. of Sir R. M. Keith," ii, 355-74; Sybel, bk. ii, ch. vi. The Congress of Sistova was adjourned on 10th February for some weeks.

[2] Vivenot, 5.

[3] *Ibid.*, 9, 10; Beer, "Die orientalische Politik Oesterreichs," App. I.

[4] "F. O.," Russia, 20. "The Emperor still continues, notwithstanding his professions, to flatter the Empress that he may yet enter the lists in her favour" (Whitworth to Leeds, 18th January 1791). See Keith's letters from Sistova, showing the resolve of Austria to evade the Reichenbach terms, and wring Orsova from the Turks ("Mems. of Sir R. M. Keith," ii, 365 *et seq.*).

—"I am assured on good authority that he talks of 10,000,000 rix dollars for the first campaign, and 7,000,000 for every succeeding one."[1] Rumour, then, saw in Gustavus not merely a knight errant, but a shrewd bargainer; and we now know that he had come to some secret understanding with Catharine. By methods not very unusual in that age, the British Embassy at Stockholm managed to procure and decipher a letter of the Swedish monarch to his envoy at London, Baron Nolcken, dated 7th December 1790. In it he expressed regret and annoyance that England still kept a large fleet ready for service in the Baltic, and urged Nolcken to point out that the British ships would find great difficulty in procuring provisions in that sea, as Sweden must refuse them.[2] The experience of our sailors, especially in the years 1810-11, has since corroborated that statement.

This was not all. Gustavus was then revolving a grandiose project for the invasion of Normandy by Swedish and Russian troops, in order to crush the French Revolution. Catharine humoured the notion, more, it would seem, with the aim of protecting herself from British warships than of re-establishing Louis XVI;[3] for, as was often to appear, her royalist heroics never led to definite action. To the Tancred of the North, however, her friendship seemed all important; and it was therefore possible that, in the interests of monarchy, he might add his fleet to hers. Pitt had cause to fear such a hostile combination; for on 11th February 1791 Ewart assured him that the Empress of Russia was convinced, "since her peace with Sweden, that no British fleet could operate in the Baltic with any success, and that the [British] Minister would risk the loss of his popularity by such an expedition."[4] Her surmise was to be justified by events. Nevertheless, Pitt cherished the hope of browbeating Russia; and, as the sequel will show, this would have given to the hard-pressed Poles a precious time of reprieve. For it was not so much Turkey as Poland whose fortunes were at stake. The events of the years 1791, 1792, virtually decided the doom of that interesting people, and opened to the Muscovites the way into the heart of Europe.

As we saw in Chapter XXIII, the Prusso-Polish treaty of

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34435.

[2] "F. O.," Sweden, 11.

[3] R. Nisbet Bain, "Gustavus III," ii, 120-3. See, too, Geffroy, "Gustave III et la Cour de France."

[4] Pitt MSS., 332.

29th March 1790 spread dismay at Petersburg. But the lavish use of Russian gold among the ruck of the Polish nobles in the Diet at Warsaw soon strengthened the anti-Prussian prejudices of that impulsive and passionate body; and the insatiable land-hunger of Hertzberg ere long begot a feeling that the ally was the worst enemy. The feeling was not of recent growth. In the year 1775, that is, three years after the first partition of Poland, Prussia sought to strangle the export trade of that land by imposing heavy customs dues on all Polish products sent down the Vistula, a policy which caused an indignant patriot to declare their removal to be almost as vital as the recovery of Galicia to his country's welfare.[1] All the more did the Prussians persevere in their policy, which clearly involved the ruin of the trade of the free city of Danzig (a close ally of the Polish State) as a prelude to its annexation.[2] Along with it they hoped to secure the cession of the Polish fortress and district of Thorn.

The Diet at Warsaw hotly resented this conduct, declaring that the loss of those much prized districts could be compensated by nothing less than the whole of Galicia. Accordingly, when Prussia began to bargain with Austria for the cession to Poland of only part of Galicia, the rage of the Poles knew no bounds; and, as we saw, the Court of Berlin finally fell back on Pitt's policy of the *status quo*. Nevertheless, even after the settlement at Reichenbach, Frederick William and Hertzberg harked back to the former scheme, so that, at the end of the year 1790, the Poles decided to ask the British Government for advice and help. For this purpose they sent to London as special envoy Count Oginski, their Minister at The Hague. He had two interviews with Pitt, whom he describes as "very polite, speaking French with an English accent, but fluently enough and with marked precision." At first Pitt let his visitor discourse at length, refrained from committing himself, and then suggested a second meeting. By that time he had before him several maps and a memorial from London merchants against throwing open the navigation of the Vistula, as it would end their special privileges. On this he remarked that merchants thought about nothing but trade, and launched into an argument on behalf of the advantages of the Prussian scheme, as providing Poland with what she most needed, a good commercial treaty with Prussia.

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[1] "F. O.," Poland, 4. Hailes to Leeds, 12th June 1790.

[2] The Prussians forced the Danzig trade to Elbing. Dembinski, i, 101.

He also showed to Oginski a letter of the King of Prussia in favour of that proposal. Turning to wider topics, he urged the Count to press on his people the need of better agriculture, an extended system of canals, and other means of transport and export. England, he said, needed Polish corn, timber, flax, and hemp, as a counterpoise to the Russian trade in those articles; and, as the fortunes of Poland, both political and commercial, touched us closely, the Prusso-Polish settlement must not be such as to harm our interests. He then charged Oginski to declare this to his Government, and expressed his intention of giving similar instructions to Hailes at Warsaw.[1] That active and intelligent envoy had long been working, in consort with Ewart at Berlin, for the inclusion of Poland in the Anglo-Prussian compact, as a means of deadening the poison of Russian influence in the Republic; and in a pamphlet which he either wrote or inspired, he depicted in glowing colours the results attainable by "a grand federative chain (England, Holland, Prussia, Poland, and, perhaps, Sweden and Turkey) which would assure a long time of peace to our hemisphere."[2]

Similar thoughts, though of a more practical trend, were shaping themselves in the mind of Pitt. The interview with Oginski and the reports from Berlin and Warsaw convinced him of the need of a compact with Poland and the Scandinavian States as a safeguard against Russia. Consequently the Foreign Office on 8th January 1791 despatched to Francis Jackson at Berlin (then acting as *locum tenens* for Ewart) instructions of far-reaching import. They set forth the reasons why England and Prussia should prepare the way for joint alliances, not only with Poland, but also with Denmark and Sweden, if that were possible. The Court of Berlin, it was hoped, might rise to the height of the situation and render possible so desirable a consummation.

At that time the fortunes of Poland appeared radiant with promise. Late in the year 1790 the Court of Warsaw sought to free itself from Prussian dictation and Muscovite intrigue by a compact with the Sultan which would assure a free exit for Polish products down the River Dniester (then in Turkish territory) to the Black Sea. Selim III welcomed an offer which promised to strengthen both lands against their common enemy, Russia; and it seemed likely that Poland would gain the right of navigation in the Black Sea for fifty of her ships. Had this come about, she would have lessened her dependence on Prussia in the Vistula valley, besides securing valuable markets in the Levant. But it was not to be. The Sultan, then in sore straits for the next campaign against Catharine, insisted that the Poles should declare war upon the Czarina whatever Frederick William might do, and thus ensured the failure of a compact which promised to range the two threatened States along with England and Prussia.[1] If the Poles had had timely support from Berlin and London, there is little doubt that they would have clogged the efforts of Catharine, besides escaping from the tutelage of St. Petersburg. In that case the league outlined by Hailes and, in part at least, approved by Pitt would have come within the bounds of possibility. Other requisites were the abatement of Prusso-Polish jealousies, and the adoption of a sound and steady policy by Gustavus III. Such were the difficulties in the way of Pitt. It will ever redound to his honour that at this time of intrigue and rapine he sought to assure the union and the preservation of the lesser States.

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[1] "Mems. de Michel Oginski," i, 92-9.

[2] "F. O.," Poland, 5. Hailes's despatches of January 1791.

Among the warping influences of the time not the least was the policy of Hertzberg. After the success of the Triple Alliance in compelling Austria to come to terms with Turkey, he pressed England to help in compelling the Czarina to adopt the same course; and, as he had recently supported Pitt in coercing Spain, the latter felt in honour bound to respond. But Hertzberg had long been shifting his ground. He valued the alliance with England and Holland chiefly because it secured Prussia's western frontier and coast-line, thereby enabling her to play a bold game in the East, and to prepare to round off her then almost scattered domains in the valley of the Vistula. There the Polish districts around Danzig and Thorn ate into her lands and might even become a source of danger if that singular Republic once more passed under Muscovite control. We may freely admit that to a military State like Prussia the situation was annoying, and that Pitt himself, had he been in office in Berlin, would have sought to assure her eastern frontier by some plan of exchange. In truth, his despatches and his converse with Oginski show that he appreciated the difficulties of the Court of Berlin and tried to induce the Poles to cede Danzig (not Thorn) to Prussia in exchange for a good commercial treaty. It is therefore false to assert, as German writers have done, that he showed no regard for Prussian interests. Unfortunately his solution of the difficulty proved to be impracticable. Polish national sentiment was very susceptible on this point; and a special decree of the Warsaw Diet finally forbade any cession of the national territory, though (strictly speaking) Danzig was only allied to the Republic.

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[1] "F. O.," Poland, 4. Hailes to Leeds, 1st and 11th December 1790.

But long before the failure of Pitt's well-meant attempt at compromise Hertzberg had been seeking to compass his aims by secret help from the Power which ostensibly he was about to coerce. Seeing that Pitt had thwarted his earlier schemes by the pacification of Reichenbach, he made covert advances to Russia, and that, too, at the time when Frederick William had expressly charged him to drop the Danzig-Thorn proposals. Opening his heart to the Russian envoy, Alopeus, he said that, if the Empress limited her claims to such a trifle (*peu de chose*) as Oczakoff and the land up to the Dniester, the two Powers could easily come to a friendly understanding, provided that Russia did not thwart the scheme just named. He then suggested that, as he was forbidden by the King to make that proposal, it would be well that it should come from St. Petersburg; in which case he would give it his hearty support. Indeed, he would find no difficulty in proving that the support of Russia and the gains aforesaid were far more desirable than the friendship of England, from whom Prussia had received nothing in return for all the services she had rendered.[1] This is in germ the Second Partition of Poland. Betraying his own Sovereign and his allies, England and Poland, Hertzberg invited the Power which he was ostensibly threatening, to work her will on Turkey provided that she helped Prussia to secure the two coveted Polish districts. Even in that age of duplicity and violence conduct such as this bore the mark of infamy. It led to the fall of the schemer, but not until his treachery had sapped Pitt's policy at the base.

As chance would have it, this insidious offer was made known at St. Petersburg on the very day when the British and Prussian envoys presented their demand for the restitution by Russia of all her recent conquests. The result can readily be imagined. Catharine, knowing the Prussian threats to be mere stage thunder, resolved to defy both Powers.[1] To Whitworth the Russian Vice-Chancellor, Ostermann, behaved as much in sorrow as in anger. He complained of the unprecedentedly menacing tone adopted by the Allies. He declared that the Empress would never accept their terms, and would limit herself strictly to an acceptance of the good offices of England, "inasmuch as they may tend to procure for her the indemnity she requires—Oczakoff and its district." Rather than forego this, she would commit her fortunes into the hand of Providence, braving all perils rather than tarnish the glory of a long and splendid reign by a craven surrender. Whitworth saw in this declaration a threat of war, but he little knew who was the special Providence of the situation. In fact he flattered himself that, despite the news of the capture of Ismail by the Russians, the Empress must give way under the pressure of the Triple Alliance. His verdict was as follows:

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[1] Dembinski, i, 103, 104. Alopeus to Ostermann, 6th December 1790 (N.S.). The British archives show that Hertzberg continued to smile on our efforts to coerce Russia, and encouraged the Turks to do their utmost against her. Jackson to Leeds, 4th January 1791 ("F. O.," Prussia, 20).

> Abandoned by her Allies [Austria and Denmark], destitute of internal as well as external resources, without confidence in the persons she is obliged to employ at the head of her fleet and army, both of which are incapable of acting against a formidable enemy; and, added to this, a strong spirit of discontent against the Government and its measures prevalent throughout the country—how can we suppose it possible that, under such circumstances, pride and obstinacy can maintain their ground? These, however, are the only motives which influence the Court of Petersburg.[2]

Whitworth's forecast deserves to be borne in mind; for he, together with Ewart or Jackson at Berlin, and Hailes at Warsaw, was best qualified to judge of Russia's power of resisting the British demands. Ewart, our able ambassador at Berlin, spent the winter of 1790-1 in England for the benefit of his health; and there are signs in his correspondence with Pitt that he fully explained to him and to other Ministers the importance of the issues at stake. He showed that, unless Turkey retained the Oczakoff district, both she and Poland would be liable to further encroachments from Russia. He declared that the British demand of a restitution of that district by Russia, sent off on 14th November, would be firmly supported at Berlin; and, he continued, "though the Empress of Russia may, and probably will, make some difficulties at first, there can be little doubt of her accepting the terms offered before the spring, since she never can venture to risk the consequences of a refusal." Ewart, then, was more positive than Whitworth that Catharine would not risk a war with the Allies; and Pitt, with his sanguine spirit, doubtless had the same expectation. Ewart also opened up wide vistas in the diplomatic sphere. He advised Pitt to bring not only Turkey but also Poland into the Triple Alliance; for this step would at once overthrow the influence of the Bourbon Courts at Constantinople and that of Russia at Warsaw.[1]

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[1] Dembinski, i, 108-10. Ostermann to Alopeus, 1st January 1791 (N.S.).

[2] "F. O.," Russia, 20. Whitworth to Leeds, 8th January 1790.

Despite Grenville's disapproval of the latter proposal, Pitt and Leeds decided to act on it; and, as we have seen, sent an offer of alliance to the Polish Court.[2] The matter was of urgent importance; for rumours of Hertzberg's underhand clutches at Danzig and Thorn had reached Warsaw and gave new strength to Muscovite intrigues. The prospect of an alliance with England was warmly welcomed by Polish patriots; and there is little doubt that, had Hertzberg loyally supported Pitt's resolve to check the advance of Russia, a completely different turn would have been given to national developments in the East of Europe.

At the outset, the British Cabinet had reasons for trusting Hertzberg. Through the year 1790 he insisted on the need of strenuous action against Russia. It was his policy rather than that of Pitt, who at first took it up somewhat doubtfully. There is not a sentence in the British despatches which has a warlike ring. In the month of December the fleet was placed on a peace footing once more—a grave tactical error, for it lessened the effect of the British "Declaration" at St. Petersburg; and in the missive of 8th January to Jackson, the hope is distinctly expressed that war may be avoided. There were good grounds for such an expectation. Spain appeared to favour the cause of the Allies; and Leopold, at the end of a fruitless strife, might be expected to oppose the aggrandisement of Russia. Pitt therefore refused to prepare for war until the intentions of the doubtful States—Austria, Spain, Denmark, and Sweden—were better known.[1]

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[1] Pitt MSS., 332. Ewart to Pitt, 16th November 1790.

[2] "F. O.," Poland, 5. Leeds to Hailes, 8th January 1791. This evidence and the facts stated later on, in my judgement refute the statement of Lecky (v. 287) that the political security of Poland did not enter into the motives of Pitt's policy.

The horizon cleared but slowly. The Danish Court declared its intention of not breaking with the Empress, who had guaranteed to it the Duchy of Holstein. Austria, while assuring the Allies that she would not take up arms for Catharine, favoured her claims at the Conference of Sistova. As for Gustavus III, he seemed to be holding out for the highest bid for his alliance. In the middle of February he assured Liston (it was between the acts of the Opera) that he was not pledged to Russia, and might join the Allies on consideration of a subsidy of £1,500,000 for each campaign. Spain also balanced at times, as if her sole object were to restore her waning prestige; but on the whole she opposed the threatened entrance of Russia into Mediterranean politics, as France would probably have done had she been less torn by internal strifes.[2]

On the whole, then, the general situation favoured the Allies, provided that they were true to one another. But here lay the chief difficulty. The divergence of interests between the Maritime States and Prussia could be reconciled only by generous forbearance and whole-hearted good faith. Britons and Dutchmen wanted peace, provided that their navies and their commerce would not suffer from the stride of Russia southwards. The Court of Berlin cared less for commerce (except as a means of coercing Poland), but longed for a better frontier on the East. Unfortunately good faith was not then characteristic of Prussian policy. Jackson suspected Hertzberg of duplicity, but believed his power to be on the wane. Moreover, other counsellors, especially the latest favourite, Bischoffswerder, seemed true to the British alliance. The King probably intended to keep troth; but he either could not or did not prevent the secret intrigues of Hertzberg from undermining the efforts of the

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 20. Leeds to Jackson, 8th January 1791.

[2] *Ibid.* Jackson's despatches of 23rd January, 12th, 17th, 26th February, 1st March; "F. O.," Russia, 20. Whitworth's despatches of 14th, 18th, 25th January (on the "defection" of Spain from Russia); "F. O.," Sweden, 20, Liston to Leeds, 17th February. For the fears of Marie Antoinette and the French Court that British armaments were aimed at France, see Sorel, ii, 181, 182.

Allies both at Warsaw and St. Petersburg. One of the great mistakes of his reign was in not dismissing that statesman outright; but instead of that he merely ordered him once more to desist from his pet scheme, the acquisition of Danzig and Thorn.

The policy of the Court of Berlin now took one more turn underground. The King, weary of the haughty airs and restless ways of Hertzberg, and desirous of putting forth a feeler towards Vienna, sent Bischoffswerder on a secret mission to the Court of Vienna (February 1791). Hertzberg knew no more of its aims than did Frederick William of the intrigue of his Foreign Minister with the Russian Chancery. Thus Prussian policy was two-headed. The official head, while echoing the menacing tones of Pitt to Russia, secretly encouraged that Power to retain all its conquests, provided that Prussia acquired the two coveted towns on the Vistula; and Bischoffswerder sought to allure the Emperor. The King's favourite (a poor Saxon nobleman who had won his way at Court by chameleonic subservience to all the royal moods) was charged to confer direct with Leopold, and to propose that the two States should mutually guarantee their present possessions and aim at excluding Russian influence from Poland. He was also to suggest the peaceable acquisition by Prussia of Danzig and Thorn in exchange for commercial privileges granted to the Poles.[1] Leopold II smiled so graciously on these proposals as to elicit from the envoy the ecstatic description: "*Quelle bonté; quelle clarté: et quelle sérénité!*" This benignity enticed Bischoffswerder on to make the singular offer that, if the Emperor granted Prussia her heart's desire, she on her side would not persist in applying the strict *status quo* against Austria at Sistova.

Even this enticing proposal did not dissolve either the hatred of Kaunitz for Pussia or the determination of Leopold to favour Catharine. Both the Emperor and his Chancellor saw that Prussia was seeking to set them against Russia; and policy prompted them to work for a war between those two Powers.[2] No suspicion of these hidden motives ruffled the equanimity of the amateur diplomatist, who flattered himself that he had won over Leopold and assured the isolation of Russia. Full blown with pride he returned to Berlin, and advocated energetic measures against Russia, the result of which will appear in due course.[1]

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[1] Vivenot, *op. cit.*, 78, 79.

[2] *Ibid.*, 98 *et seq.* Cobenzl to Kaunitz, 4th March 1791 Beer, "Leopold II, Franz I, und Catharina," 39 *et seq.*

We must now return to London in order to sift somewhat closely the evidence which came in from various quarters. In a question of so much importance and complexity, which influenced the fate of the East as well as the career of Pitt, we cannot proceed too cautiously; and the inductive method here attempted seems to be the only means of avoiding hasty decisions, and of re-constructing the history of the crisis.

The Dutch, as might be expected, were far less eager than Prussia for the humbling of Catharine's pride, especially as they had recently lent her a considerable sum of money. Lord Auckland, our envoy at The Hague, entered into their views and set them forth with his usual ability. From the beginning of this question he opposed the energetic measures recommended by Ewart; and certain expressions in his letters smack of personal dislike to that ambassador.[2] His position at The Hague kept him in touch with the British couriers passing through to the northern and eastern capitals; and his very voluminous papers (a small part only of which has seen the light) yield proofs of his activity in urging Pitt and the Duke of Leeds to patch matters up with Russia. In a letter of 2nd February 1791, to Huber, he deprecates any attempt to coerce Russia, even though it may be crowned by success:

> The state of our debt, of our revenue, of our trade, and the unsettled disposition of mankind in general, forms altogether a great object of importance in my ideas, far beyond that of taking a feather out of the cap of an old vixen or of preserving a desert tract of ground between two rivers to the Turks, whose political existence and safety will probably not be diminished if they are obliged to have their barrier upon the Dniester, or even on the Danube. Besides I see many symptoms . . . which irrefragably prove to me that our friends at Berlin are in general at least as much afraid of a Russian war as I am. . . .[3]

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[1] I differ from Dr. Salomon ("Pitt," 514) as to the motives which impelled the Prussian King at this time.

[2] On 29th July 1791 Auckland wrote to Grenville about Ewart's "misconceived energy and violence" (B.M. Add. MSS., 34438). See, too, "Auckland Journals," ii, 392-3.

[3] B.M. Add. MSS., 34436. Ewart must somehow have seen this letter, for he quoted some of its phrases in his letter of 11th February to Pitt (Pitt MSS., 332). See, too, his letters of 8th February and 5th March to Lord Grenville in "Dropmore P.," ii, 31, 38.

In the following letter, dated The Hague, 7th March, he sought to win over Lord Grenville to his views:

> It appears from these despatches that we have nothing to expect from the Danish Ministry, which is immoveably devoted to Russia; and that Sweden, unless previously purchased by the Empress, would possibly undertake one campaign against her upon payment of £1,500,000. [He names other expenses amounting to another £1,500,000.] . . . In plain truth, this phantom of Oczakow has appeared to me for some time to beckon us towards an abyss of new debts and endless difficulties at a moment of general fermentation in the world when it may be essential perhaps to the very existence of our Government and of many other civilized States that we should maintain our own internal peace and the uninterrupted course of our prosperity.[1]

Auckland's chief opponent, Ewart, now had the ear of the Cabinet. On 8th March he frankly informed Auckland that his health had so far recovered as to permit him to return to Berlin; but he believed his duty to lie in London where he frequently saw the chief Ministers. He added that the meeting of the Cabinet, which was to decide as to the means of coercing Russia, would take place very shortly; further, that Ministers "have admitted my statement of facts to be just; so that the whole can be reduced to a simple calculation. I can venture to assure your Lordship in the most positive manner that nothing is to be apprehended from the present state of the Prussian Cabinet; and I will answer for its being much better than ever it was, provided we go on."[2] Clearly, then, Ewart had some difficulty in convincing Pitt and his colleagues that Russia would give way if the Allies showed a determined front.

Pitt himself was now beset by doubts whether the Oczakoff district was worth the risk of a war. As will shortly appear, Catharine had left the extent of her territorial demands discreetly vague, so that the Whigs were able to assert that Russia wanted merely the barren strip of land around Oczakoff. The town itself was held to be a valuable possession because it commanded the entrance to the large estuary called the Liman, which is formed by the Rivers Dnieper and Bug. Auckland, however, brought to judgement an able witness, a Dutch admiral, Kingsbergen, who, after serving in the Russian navy several years in those waters, declared that Oczakoff was of little importance either to the Turks or the Russians. Pitt took up this question with alacrity, and on 7th March wrote to Auckland for definite answers to these inquiries. Whether the Turks, if they resumed possession of Oczakoff, could hinder the junction of Russian squadrons sailing from Kherson and Sevastopol, and thereby hamper the preparations for an attack on Constantinople? Whether the retention of Oczakoff by Russia would not enable her to command the southern exit of Polish commerce, namely, down the River Dniester to the Black Sea? Also, whether Oczakoff could not be so strengthened (rumour described it as in part demolished) as once again to defy a Russian attack?[1]

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34436.

[2] *Ibid.*

To these searching questions Admiral Kingsbergen made the following replies. Oczakoff did not command the entrance to the Liman, as that was four cannon-shot wide, and the navigable channel was nearer to the Kinburn, or Russian, side than to Oczakoff. Neither of these places was a port; and the value of Kherson (the naval station on the Dnieper) was much overrated. Russia would do well to spend all her energies on Sevastopol or Balaclava, to which places she could easily bring all the naval stores from the Don or Dnieper district. Those ports would be the best starting points for an attack on Constantinople, which the Turks, even if masters of Oczakoff, could in no wise prevent. When he (Kingsbergen) in 1773 prepared a plan for attacking Constantinople he took little thought of the Turkish garrison at Oczakoff. Indeed that town must always be isolated and a source of expense, even of danger, to the Porte. The admiral felt unable to say whether the cession of Oczakoff and its district to Russia would adversely affect the trade of Poland to the Black Sea, and he opined that it would not much extend the power and population of Russia in the south.[2]

In this last conjecture the admiral was wholly wrong. We can now see that the acquisition by Russia of the valuable territory in question, on which now stands the port of Odessa, opened up to her almost boundless possibilities of controlling the Balkan Peninsula and of strangling Poland. On the naval matters referred to by Pitt, Kingsbergen's answer bore the stamp of experience and authority. It proved that Oczakoff in itself was of little worth; but it did not prove that the whole district up to the Dniester was equally valueless.

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[1] "Auckland Journals," ii, 382.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 34436. Auckland to Leeds, 15th March 1791; also in "F. O.," Holland, 34 (received on 19th March).

We have proof of Pitt's anxiety to probe this question thoroughly. In the Pitt MSS. is a long memorandum which aims at showing that the growth of Russia's power and trade in the Baltic was to our advantage, as she supplied us with much needed naval stores, through a sea over which we could exercise some measure of control. But her progress to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean was greatly to be deprecated; for she would then furnish those stores to our rivals, France and Spain, through ports which were never blocked by ice. Further, if she gained the Oczakoff district, she could shut out the trade of the Poles from the Black Sea, while extending her own markets through the Levant and the Mediterranean, to our detriment. The prospects of her gaining Constantinople are also dwelt upon; and the conclusion of the anonymous writer is that we ought at all costs to hinder her southward march, even while we hailed her as a friend in the Baltic.[1] Doubts of various kinds also beset the mind of the Duke of Leeds. On 11th March he wrote thus to Auckland:

> . . . The present situation of affairs is, I confess, by no means pleasant, and perhaps, all things considered, the most perplexing point is to extricate ourselves from the risk of a war, *salvo honore*. We are in my opinion so far committed as to render this, however desirable, extremely difficult, if not impracticable. [He then states that the successes of the Russians make it difficult now to insist on the absolute *status quo*, of which he had never wholly approved.] Yet in my mind [he continues] it behoves us (considering the part we have so decidedly, tho' perhaps not very wisely, taken,) more than ever to abide by our former determination, or the Empress's ambition will be gratified, not only at the expense of the Turkish territory, but of the reputation of this Government. So much for the engagements (thanks to Prussia) we have entered into. I will now beg to call your Lordship's attention to the extent of the Russian conquests, which I think deserving the most serious attention on our part. Oczakow and its district, it seems is (or at least was) all the Empress in her moderation will insist on keeping. This district by the bye (according to Woronzow's language, as well as my own suspicion) includes the whole tract of country from the Bog [*sic*] to the Dniester. However barren the soil may be, the command of the latter river, its *embouchure* being at the mercy of Russia, will operate a con-

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[1] Pitt MSS., 337.

siderable change in the influence of that Power in the Black Sea, whether with a view to hostile operations or to commercial engagements, and completely shut out Poland from her southern *débouché*.[1] . . .

Nothing is more singular in this letter than the confession of the Foreign Minister that he does not know exactly what extent of land the Empress demands—a matter infinitely favourable to the Opposition in Parliament. Certainly the Duke of Leeds and Whitworth had not manœuvred skilfully in leaving this all-important question in doubt.

To resume, then, we find that neither Pitt nor his colleague knew the extent of the Czarina's demands, which, at the request of Prussia, they were about to oppose; that Leeds secretly doubted the wisdom of this policy; that Pitt found out by 19th March the comparative unimportance of Oczakoff itself, however valuable the whole territory might be to Polish merchants; that the Dutch were most reluctant to take any part in the dispute; that Austria was playing a dilatory and threatening game at Sistova; and last, but not least, that Prussian policy began to show signs of weakness and wavering.[2]

Now, the crux of the whole question was at Berlin. Jackson had not fathomed the depths of Hertzberg's duplicity. He did not know of his having prompted Russia to suggest to Frederick William a secret bargain at the expense of Poland; but on 6th March he stated that Danzig and Thorn still held the first place in that statesman's thoughts, despite the express veto of his master. The Prussian Minister sought to justify his behaviour by assuring Jackson that, in case of a war with Russia, Leopold would step in and dictate his terms to Prussia as a revenge for her treatment of him at Reichenbach. Accordingly, Hertzberg refused to take comfort from Jackson's remark that the splendid army of Prussia (numbering 208,000 effectives) would be a match for the exhausted and badly led forces of the two Empires, distracted as they would be by the efforts of the Ottomans in the south. He also affected great concern lest England should play him false by sending only a small fleet into the Baltic. But Jackson saw, rightly enough, that the two phantoms, a triumphant Austria and a skeleton British fleet, were conjured up merely as an excuse for doubling back to the

[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34436.

[2] "Mems. of Sir R. M. Keith," ii, 367-70, 379.

forbidden fruit—Danzig and Thorn. Hertzberg finally suggested the advisability of toning down the allied demands in order to mollify the Czarina.[1] Thus the first suggestion to this effect came, not from Pitt or Auckland, but from the man who had first advised the use of coercive measures against Russia. Is it surprising, then, that up to 20th March 1791 Pitt declined to take any vigorous steps against Catharine? The whole trend of events prescribed caution and delay until the policy of Prussia showed signs of consistency and firmness. But now the whole situation was suddenly to change owing to causes which must be set forth in the following chapter.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 20. Jackson to Leeds, 9th March. See Heidrich, "Preussen im Kampfe gegen die Franz. Revolution" (1908), ch. i, for the causes of the double face worn by Prussian policy at this time.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TRIUMPH OF CATHARINE II

A pretty piece of work Mr. Pitt has made of this Russian war. I think all the foxhounds will have a fine chase at him next session.—LADY MALMESBURY TO SIR GILBERT ELLIOT, 24*th August* 1791.

THE success of Pitt in playing the part of Petruchio to Catharine depended mainly on the steadiness of the Prussian and British Governments, the honest neutrality of Leopold, the goodwill of Gustavus, and the conviction of the Czarina that she was hopelessly outmatched. We have already seen that the actions of the Austrian and Swedish sovereigns were ambiguous. It remains to consider the conduct of the Prussian monarch. On 11th March 1791 Frederick William wrote the following autograph letter to Count Redern, his Minister in London:

> [*Translation.*]
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> Having a sure belief that Austria desires to draw closer to me and my Allies, and that the Emperor has declared to the Empress of Russia that he cannot assist her in a war that might result from her refusal to accept the *status quo*, I wish England to consider whether the best course of action would not be that of inducing Russia by means of superior forces, both naval and military, to follow the example of the Emperor. But, in case England cannot resolve on so vigorous a course of action, the cession of Oczakoff would be its natural outcome. It seems to me incontestable that Russia by the possession of that place gains over Turkey a superiority which may be very prejudicial to the interests even of England. As the decisive moment is drawing near, I await a definite declaration on this subject.

Here was a distinct challenge to our good faith as an ally of Prussia. The Duke of Leeds received it on 19th or 20th March. Jackson's covering despatch supplied a curious commentary on the royal missive. He had found out that Hertzberg's plan of aggrandisement at the expense of Poland was much more widely favoured at Berlin than he believed to be possible. General Möllendorf feared a war with Russia in view of the threatening attitude of Austria. Count Schulenberg thought the position very difficult, but hoped that the presence of a "large" British fleet in the Baltic might overawe Catharine and end the dispute. Even Bischoffswerder, who had returned from his mission to Vienna in the most buoyant spirits, expressed concern at the irresolute mood of Frederick William; but he promised to report progress after an interview which he was to have with him at a private dinner on that day. Late in the evening the favourite declared that he had convinced the monarch of the falseness of Hertzberg's information about Austria. In fact, the dinner and Bischoffswerder's conversation brought Frederick William to see the need of bold measures against Russia; and he drew up forthwith that inspiriting challenge to England. Bischoffswerder also assured our envoy that the anti-British intrigues were the work of Anglophobes like Prince Henry of Prussia, or of those who wished to maintain the influence of the reigning favourite, the Countess Dönhoff, and keep the King immersed in his pleasures.[1]

A more damning explanation of the King's action cannot be conceived; and we learn with some surprise that the royal appeal carried the day at the British Cabinet's meetings of 21st and 22nd March, when Ministers had before them the declaration of the Dutch admiral as to the comparative uselessness of Oczakoff. The final resolve was formed on 25th March, when the ultimatum to Russia was drawn up and sent to the King for his approval.[2] Evidently it was the arrival of Frederick William's letter that clinched the matter. On the 27th the Foreign Office sent off despatches to Berlin and St. Petersburg, warning Jackson and Whitworth of the definite demand of the Allies, that Catharine must restore to the Turks all her conquests exclusive of the Crimea. The Allies hoped to induce Gustavus by the joint offer of a sum of £200,000, or even £300,000, to grant the use of his ports to the British fleet destined for the Baltic.[3]

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 20. Jackson to Leeds, 11th March 1791 (received 19th March).

[2] "Leeds Mem.," 150-2.

[3] Leeds to Jackson, 27th March 1791. Russia then was seeking to form an alliance with Sweden and Denmark with a view to declaring the Baltic a *mare clausum* ("F. O.," Russia, 20. Whitworth to Leeds, 25th March 1791).

The British ultimatum to Russia took the form of a "representation," the original of which is in Pitt's handwriting. It pointed out that, the *status quo* having been adopted as the basis of the treaties concluded between Austria and the Porte and Russia and Sweden, the Allies had hoped that the Empress of Russia would accept the same reasonable terms for her peace with the Sultan. But, as this was not the case, the two Courts now desired to point out that any further accession of territory to Russia was far from necessary to her, and must seriously weaken the Turkish dominions. They therefore invited the Empress to declare her readiness to offer reasonable terms to the Sultan. The failure to give a favourable answer within ten days would be regarded as a refusal.[1] Pitt also sought to infuse energy into the Dutch Government. On the same day he directed Auckland, our ambassador at The Hague, to request the equipment of a Dutch squadron with a view to a cruise to the Baltic along with the British fleet, it being certain that Catharine would give way before so great a superiority of force.[2]

It seemed, then, that Pitt and his colleagues had nailed their colours to the mast; and their behaviour in Parliament betokened no lack of resolve. On the day following (28th March) Pitt presented the King's message as to the need of further naval armaments. Fox, "with more than usual solemnity," demanded that Parliament should know the reasons for the present request; but Pitt declined to promise any more information than that contained in the brief official statement. Fox at once censured this refusal as "a very new, violent and extraordinary step indeed." Pitt here showed a want of tact. A more sympathetic nature would have felt the pulse of the House and discerned feverish symptoms. Already members had been alarmed by the outbreak of war against Tippoo Sahib; and though Ministers had convicted that potentate of aggressions against our ally, the Rajah of Travancore, yet the House evinced more than its usual jealousy respecting foreign entanglements, and resented Pitt's demand for warlike preparations. In refusing to explain the grounds for his present action the Prime Minister behaved as a correct diplomatist, but an indifferent parliamentarian.

On 29th March the Whig leaders in the Lords showed their former fondness for the Russian alliance in a series of startling assertions. Earl Fitzwilliam denied that the retention of Oczakoff, or even Akerman, would in the slightest degree injure British interests. Lord Porchester reprobated the ambitious conduct of the Prime Minister, which almost led him to hope that France might recover her strength, so as to check his career. The country, he added, was in the deepest distress,[1] and would be ruined by the hostilities now imminent. The Earl of Carlisle declared that Russia was naturally our friend, and that we ought to have formed alliances that were useful, not such as would drag us into a criminal war. The naval armament against Spain had served merely to "pillage the public and make a show between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight." Lord Stormont then treated the House to a disquisition on Turkish history to prove that the Porte had always been the tool of France against the two Empires; and it was her game we now were asked to play. For the rest, it would be "extremely disagreeable" to send a fleet into the Baltic if Sweden, deserted by us, showed herself unfriendly. The Duke of Richmond damned the proposal with faint praise, and he was guardedly followed by the Lord Chancellor, Thurlow. Nevertheless, Ministers held their own by ninety-seven votes to thirty-four.

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[1] "F. O.," Russia, 20. Leeds to Whitworth, 27th March 1791.

[2] "F. O.," Holland, 34. Pitt to Auckland, 27th March.

On the same day Pitt brought the matter before the Commons in a somewhat cold and ineffective manner. He showed that the interests of Europe demanded the restoration of the old boundaries in the East; and that the weakening of Turkey would undermine the defensive system which we had formed with Prussia. From the meagre report of his speech it would appear that he did not refer to the importance of upholding Poland or of hindering the approach of Russia to the Mediterranean. Consequently all the life and glow of the debate was on the side of the Opposition. Coke of Norfolk, in a characteristically acrid speech, declared that he believed neither in the abilities nor the integrity of the Prime Minister, who now, as in the case of the Spanish dispute, bade them throw away the nation's money without showing a single reason why. Lambton followed in the same vein, asserting that a war with Russia would yield no prize in galleons and ingots, but merely in bear-skins. At what point, he asked, had Russia injured our interests or insulted our honour? Doubtless Ministers had promised the King of Prussia to go to war with the Czarina. If so, they should state it clearly. Other members then demanded more information before they supported the administration. For the defence, Steele spoke weakly, urging that the House must trust the executive.

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[1] Contrast with this the admission of Storer: "Our taxes have proved this year beyond example productive" ("Auckland Journals," ii, 389).

Fox, on the contrary, declared that Pitt had "enveloped himself in mystery and importance," and that his speech was "finely confused but very alarming." The Minister had not shown how the balance of power was endangered by the Czarina's policy. It would be time enough to go to war when she attacked Prussia, or sought to drive the Turks out of Europe—a scheme which the orator held up to ridicule. He then protested against our attacking Russia "for the recovery of a single town [*sic*]," and proceeded to indict Ministers because "they first stirred up the Turks to their own destruction to war upon Russia: they next raised the King of Sweden against the same Power, and afterwards they lost the benefit of his arms by shamefully abandoning him." Finally they had disarmed, after settling the dispute with Spain, and thus put the nation to the expense of this new armament. It is difficult to think that Fox was so ill informed as to believe these charges, the falseness of which has been proved in Chapters XXII and XXIII. In fact, these indictments merely showed him to be the trustful receptacle of the anti-British slanders started by foreign Chanceries. Nevertheless, being urged with his wonted power, they struck home; for it is ever the bent of a popular Assembly to ascribe the worst motives for actions which it dislikes.

Pitt replied with admirable temper. He showed that the recent advance of Russia southwards brought about a situation wholly different from that which existed when Fox was in power; he declared that Russia had several times rejected our proffered friendship, and that our alliances with Prussia and Holland were most advantageous. Prussia, however, would be seriously weakened if the Muscovites triumphed completely over the Sultan, and would in that case be unable to cover the Dutch Netherlands or maintain the independence of Poland. He then showed how closely this latter topic touched us; for, if we upheld Poland and cultivated trade with her, she would send us the naval stores for the supply of which we at present depended on Russia. Commercial and political motives, therefore, alike bade us set bounds to the boundless ambitions of Russia.

The effect of his statesmanlike speech (the first in which the

Eastern Question in its new phase received adequate treatment) was lessened by a vehement harangue from Burke, who was angry with Ministers for diverting attention from French affairs. At that time he and his son were striving to prepare the way for an armed intervention of the monarchs in the interests of Louis XVI; and he therefore upbraided the Cabinet for supporting "a horde of barbarous Asiatics" against the Czarina, a declared champion of royalty.[1] "All that is holy in religion," he said, "all that is moral and humane, demands an abhorrence of everything which tends to extend the power of that cruel and wasteful Empire." "Any Christian Power is to be preferred to these destructive savages." . . . "Why are we to be alarmed at the Russians' capture of a town? The Empire of Turkey is not dismembered by that. We are in possession of Gibraltar, and yet Spain is not dismembered." This appeal to sentiment and this fine disregard of the facts of geography (for the district in question is about the size of Scotland) told with much effect; and it was with some difficulty that the Government mustered 228 votes as against 135 for the Opposition.[2]

The next debates, of 12th and 15th April, brought up Grey, Whitbread, and Sheridan in their most combative moods. The last taunted Ministers with being led at the heel of Prussia, whose only desire was to seize Danzig and Thorn, and to have the upper hand at Warsaw. While not calling the tune, we were to pay the piper. He (Sheridan) was sick of the parrot cry, "Confidence! Confidence!" Ministers did not deserve it. Their conduct in Holland in 1787 had been a blow to popular liberty. And now the son of Chatham was intriguing in all the Courts of Europe, and figuring as "the posture-master of the Balance of Power." Undismayed by this brilliant invective, Dundas once more appealed for a continuance of the confidence which Ministers had merited by their conduct; and the House accorded it by 253 votes to 173. On 15th April the figures were 254 to 162.[3]

It is clear, then, that Pitt kept his party well together, despite the fact that his hands were tied by official reserve, while the Opposition ramped at large in the unalloyed bliss of ignorance.

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[1] See Burke's "Correspondence," iii, 268, where he calls Ewart "a little, busy, meddling man, little heard of till lately."

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 33-79.

[3] Earl Stanhope (ii, 115) does not give the last figures, which show that the Ministry regained ground on 15th April.

Storer might choose to tell Lord Auckland that "the country throughout have told Mr. Pitt that they will not go to war."[1] But, apart from an influential deputation from Manchester, there was no decided protest. Seven weeks later Pitt admitted to Ewart that it would have been difficult to keep his party together in the event of war, and if he had "to state, as would then be indispensable, the precise ground on which it arose."[2] But the news which arrived up to 27th March clearly warranted the hope that Russia would give way. Then, however, the diplomatic situation underwent a curious change.

On the 27th, then, that is, on the very day on which the Cabinet sent off the decisive despatches referred to above, most disconcerting news from Lord Auckland reached the Foreign Office. It was to this effect:

> With respect to the good disposition of the Count of Vienna, which is made the groundwork of His Prussian Majesty's Instruction of the 11th inst. to M. de Redern, I think it material to mention to Your Grace that, in a subsequent letter of the 12th, *in cypher*, which is gone by this day's mail to M. de Redern (and which I have happened to see), His Prussian Majesty states in terms of the strongest uneasiness that the Emperor's conduct becomes more suspicious and that he evidently intends to defeat the whole Convention of Reichenbach; that he has given up his own opinion to that of Messrs. de Kaunitz and Cobenzl and, particularly, that he is collecting large magazines and preparations in the neighbourhood of Cologne, which M. de Redern is instructed to mention to Your Grace as a subject of just uneasiness.[3]

This sudden transition from a warlike resolve to timorous prudence in part resulted from the Prussian monarch's habit of listening to two sets of advisers. Hertzberg whispered peaceful advice into one ear, while the other took in the bellicose counsels of Bischoffswerder; and the royal mind sent forth to London both sets of impressions. Other proofs were soon at hand betokening a reaction towards pleasure and inertia. Hertzberg, so Jackson reported, sought to enforce the cession of Danzig and Thorn as a *sine quâ non* of Prussia's acting conjointly with England—a step which obviously aimed at hindering such action.

Still more important was the news that came from Copenhagen. On 27th March there reached the Foreign Office a despatch from Francis Drake, our envoy at Copenhagen, who was destined one day to win unenviable notoriety as the dupe of Napoleon's secret police, and to figure in French caricatures as a ruffled mallard flying off with bottles of invisible ink. At present he merely forwarded a pacific proposal of Count Bernstorff. In the hope of averting strifes in which Denmark must inevitably suffer, that Minister had begged the Czarina to accept the terms of the Allies if they were modified in her favour. When Catharine smiled on the proposal, Bernstorff assured Drake of his desire to reconcile the Courts of St. Petersburg and London without compromising the dignity of George III. He declared that Catharine had eagerly welcomed the prospect of a peaceful arrangement, and hoped that the Allies would appreciate the force of her reasons for rejecting the strict *status quo ante*, seeing that she had been unjustly attacked by the Turks, and had won a brilliant triumph. While restoring to them a large part of her conquests, she was determined to retain "a single fortress and a desert region in order to gain a safer frontier." She therefore hoped that the Allies would show their moderation by substituting a limited *status quo* for their present demand. Bernstorff added the suggestion that she should have all the land up to the Dniester, on condition that the walls of Oczakoff were razed for all time, and that no military colonies should be founded in the ceded territory, which also should remain waste. He further hinted that Russia might be induced to grant England a favourable commercial treaty.[1]

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[1] "Auckland Journals," ii, 388.

[2] Pitt to Ewart, 24th May 1791; Stanhope, ii, 116; Tomline, iii, 260.

[3] "F. O.," Holland, 34.

This last was added as a bait especially tempting to Pitt, who had been much annoyed by the failure of his efforts in that direction in 1787, and now found the Dutch obdurate to some parts of his proposed commercial treaty with them. Is it too much to assume that, if the news which arrived on 27th March concerning the shifting of Prussian policy and the reasonableness of the Czarina had reached him two or three days earlier, he would have led the Cabinet to a far different decision? The speeches of Ministers in Parliament were now marked by coolness and caution, characteristics which came out even more strongly on 12th and 15th April.

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[1] "F. O.," Denmark, 13. Drake to Leeds, 12th March.

In B.M. Add. MSS., 34436, I have found proofs that Auckland on 19th March forwarded by special packet duplicates of the proposals described above, adding his own comments to them, of course in a favourable sense. They probably reached Whitehall about 24th March, but by that time the Cabinet's bellicose decision had gone to Windsor and received the King's assent.

The searchings of heart in the Cabinet on the anxious days 30th March—10th April are laid bare in the memoranda of the Duke of Leeds. The Duke of Richmond and Grenville were opposed to the use of coercion against Russia. Pitt, Leeds, Thurlow, Camden, and Chatham at first resolutely maintained their position. At the second meeting of the Cabinet, on 31st March, Stafford joined Grenville and Richmond. Pitt also heard of the defection of the Duke of Grafton and his sons. Camden seemed shaken by the news before them; and Thurlow attained a prudent neutrality by diplomatic slumber. Pitt himself was now impressed with the need of circumspection; and, on the ground of the proposals from Denmark, advised the sending of a special messenger to Berlin, to request Jackson not to forward the ultimatum to Russia. Leeds objected to the Danish proposal being assigned as the reason for delay, and declared that if the despatch were sent in that form, Grenville must sign it, for he could not.[1] Pitt then agreed to tone down the despatch into a request for a few days' delay. This was his first decided disagreement with Leeds. He sought to end it by friendly conversation, but in vain; for the Duke believed the honour of the Cabinet to be tarnished by so unworthy a surrender.

Pitt took a more sanguine view of the situation, as appears in some hitherto unpublished letters that passed between him and Ewart. That over-wrought envoy had departed for Buxton in the belief that he had persuaded the Cabinet of the certainty of Catharine acquiescing in the demands of the Triple Alliance. What must have been his chagrin, then, to receive a letter from Pitt, of 6th April, begging him to return to town at once. "Events have taken a turn here," wrote Pitt, "which seem to leave little or no chance of pushing our Plan to its original extent, and that the best thing we shall have to —(?) it is some modification, which perhaps, however, may be so managed as to provide more fully than could have been expected for the general object."[2] This sounds the hopeful note which was rarely missing from Pitt's utterances. Evidently he wished that Ewart should return to Berlin to make the best of the situation. Ewart had an interview with him, on or about 10th April, which he described in a letter of 14th April to Jackson, his *locum tenens* at Berlin. He found Pitt as deeply impressed as ever with the importance of the political and commercial objects at issue, which were

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[1] "Leeds Mem.," 157, 158; also despatch of 31st March to Jackson, in "F. O.," Prussia, 20.

[2] From Major-General Sir Spencer Ewart's MSS.

> well worthy of every exertion. "But," continued Pitt, "all my efforts to make a majority of the House of Commons understand the subject have been fruitless; and I know for certain that, tho' they may support me at present, I should not be able to carry the vote of credit. In short, Sir, you have seen that they can be embarked in a war from motives of passion, but they cannot be made to comprehend a case in which the most valuable interests of the country are at stake. What, then, remains to be done? Certainly, to risk my own situation, which my feelings and inclination would induce me to do without any hesitation; but there are unfortunately circumstances in the present state of this country which make it certain that confusion and the worst of consequences might be expected, and it would be abandoning the King."
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> After stating several facts in confirmation [Ewart says], and repeating, even with the tears in his eyes, that it was the greatest mortification he had ever experienced, he said he was determined not to knock under but to keep up a good countenance: that the armaments should therefore continue to be made with vigour, and the fleet to be made ready for sailing; and that in the meantime he hoped means might be found to manage matters so as not to have the appearance of giving up the point, but modifying it so as to prevent any serious bad consequences from ensuing, tho' he repeated that he was well aware that the difference between any such plan would always be very great and extremely mortifying.[1]

This revelation of Pitt's feelings and intentions is of the highest interest. Nowhere else do we hear of wounded pride bringing tears to his eyes; and nowhere do we find a clearer statement of his desire to resign, were it not that such a course would abandon the King and the country to a factious Opposition. He therefore resolved on a compromise, the weakness of which he clearly saw, because it would satisfy Parliament and his opponents in the Cabinet without too much offending Prussia or unduly exalting the horn of the Czarina. Ewart decided to return to Berlin to help on his chief, to whom he expressed unfaltering devotion. It is further noteworthy that Pitt at this time desired to send the fleet to the Baltic; and we may reasonably infer that the subsequent reversal of that salutary resolve was the work of Grenville.

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[1] From Major-General Sir Spencer Ewart's MSS.

One other detail in Ewart's letter claims attention. Why did Pitt assign so great weight to the opposition in Parliament? Had he received private remonstrances? Rumour says that Dundas and others warned him to desist from his scheme. But, as we have seen, his majority held well together. On 12th April he beat Fox by eighty votes, and on the 15th by ninety-two. How is it possible to reconcile this increase with wavering or lukewarmness? I think it probable that Pitt chose now and at a later date to ascribe his change of front to parliamentary opposition (on which he could descant), while it really resulted from difficulties in the Cabinet, on which he had to keep silence. Further, he may have hoped that if Ewart, the soul of the forward policy, consented to return to Berlin, the Duke of Leeds would find it consonant with his own dignity to retain office.

If so, he was disappointed. Before the Cabinet meeting of 10th April he had convinced himself that the pacific overtures of Catharine sent through Bernstorff were genuine and sincere. He also pointed out to the Duke that the violent language of the Opposition would certainly encourage the Empress to reject the absolute *status quo*. The inference was irresistible, that England and Prussia must be content with securing rather less for Turkey. Pitt decided in favour of this course, and on 15th and 16th April, drew up the drafts of despatches to this effect, in the hope that Leeds would sign them. The Duke, however, declined to do so, and, by the King's leave, Grenville appended his signature.

This implied a ministerial change; and on 21st April Leeds returned the seals to the King after the Drawing Room at St. James's Palace. Thus disappeared from the forefront of history a personality whose sprightliness and charm earned him a high place among the wits and amateur playwrights of that age, and whose jealousy for the honour of England at this crisis won the regard even of those who differed from him. He was far from being a great Foreign Minister. At every crisis Pitt took the reins into his own hands, and at other times the business of the Foreign Office went on somewhat loosely, Keith complaining at Vienna that in the year 1788 he received only one reply to fifty-three despatches sent from that capital.[1] The Duke's tenure of office was marked by two of the greatest triumphs ever won by peaceful means, namely, over France in 1787 and Spain in 1790; but these, as we have seen, were essentially the work of Pitt. There could be but one successor to Leeds. Grenville, though a far from attractive personality, possessed qualities of shrewdness, good sense, and untiring assiduity. He was strong where Leeds was weak, namely, in system, thoroughness, and equability; but he was weak where Leeds was strong, namely, in managing men. George III certainly approved of the accession of Grenville to power, and sent to him the seals on the same day. After some delay, arising from Pitt's desire that Cornwallis should succeed Grenville at the Home Office, Dundas took that appointment.[1]

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[1] "Keith Mems.," ii, 219, 228.

On 20th April, then, Ewart was instructed to return to Berlin for the purpose of explaining to Frederick William that the difficulties arising from the trend of public opinion and the opportunity afforded by the Danish proposals induced the British Government to seek for a peaceful compromise with Russia. Pitt also urged the desirability of Austria joining the Triple Alliance. As to the new Russo-Turkish boundary, it should be fixed if possible East of the Dniester, namely, at Lake Telegul, the lands eastward up to the River Bug being also left a desert.[2]

Ewart arrived at Potsdam on 29th April (a remarkably quick journey), and found Frederick William in a gracious mood. The King agreed to Pitt's new proposals, and highly approved of the overtures to Austria. While expressing mortification at the change of front towards Russia, he assured Ewart of his belief in the good intentions of the British Ministry. It is easy to see that Frederick William felt some relief at the prospect of avoiding a war, of which nearly all his counsellors expressed disapproval. Hertzberg on 24th April assured Lucchesini that a war with Russia would probably be the tomb of the Prussian monarchy.[3] There was, indeed, every need for caution, owing to the doubtful attitude of Austria. Lord Elgin followed the Emperor Leopold to Florence for the purpose of urging him to join the Triple Alliance; but, while receiving the overture with Tuscan graciousness, he in effect waived it aside. In vain did our envoy follow the Emperor from city to city for some weeks, and urge him to join the Allies. Leopold, with his usual penetration, saw that the situation favoured the two Empires, provided that they held together; and Pitt's offer appeared to him merely an ingenious means of separating them. Further, Kaunitz detected the rift in the Anglo-Prussian concert, and the hatred of England which pervaded the letters of Marie Antoinette to the Emperor may also have strengthened his resolve to dally with Pitt's proposals, even while he took the most effective means of thwarting them. The Polish Revolution of 3rd May 1791, soon to be described, also led Leopold to draw closer to Russia. Thus, despite affable converse with Elgin in the towns of Lombardy, he instructed his envoys at Sistova to raise their demands and assume an arrogant tone. The Turks received this rebuff with oriental composure, and, having the support of Keith and Lucchesini, resisted this flagrant attempt of Austria to shuffle out of the Reichenbach compact. Accordingly the early days of June 1791 witnessed a break in the negotiations and a rapid increase of warlike preparations on the Danube—a turn of affairs highly favourable to Catharine.[1]

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 54-6; Dr. Hunt, "Pol. Hist. of England," x, 328.

[2] "F. O.," Prussia, 21. Grenville to Ewart, 20th April 1791. The details given above refute Sorel's statement (ii, 208) that Pitt changed front *brusquement*, and charged Fawkener to say that he would give way about Oczakoff.

[3] Dembinski, i, 449.

The indignation of Pitt and Grenville at the double-dealing of Leopold finds expression in a note of the latter to Auckland (6th July): "If the Emperor does break faith with us at last, he does it in a manner so directly and personally disgraceful to himself, that it is hard to suppose he can make up his mind to hear all that he must hear in such a case."[2] In these words we see the cause of the distrust of the Emperor which clogged all attempts at an Anglo-Austrian compact directed against French democracy. Events, therefore, told heavily against Pitt's efforts to bring about an honourable compromise with Russia. Nothing, however, is further from the truth than to represent his offers to Catharine as a humiliating surrender. The instructions to

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[1] Vivenot, i, 126-37, 172-6; Clapham "Causes of the War of 1792," ch. iv; "Keith's Mems.," ii, 436-41, 448. So, too, Whitworth to Leeds, 22nd April 1791: "Count Cobenzl continues buoying them [the Russians] up with the hopes of his Court taking a part in the war" ("F. O.," Russia, 20).

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 34438. The despatches printed in Vivenot (i, 172-81) show that the arrival of Bischoffswerder at Milan on 11th June helped to thwart the efforts of Lord Elgin. Elgin suggested to Pitt on 15th June that, if war broke out, he could convict the Emperor of hindering the pacification (Pitt MSS., 132).

Fawkener, the special envoy to St. Petersburg, were as follows: Either the whole of the Oczakoff territory as far west as the River Dniester should be left neutral and uninhabited; or it should become Russian on condition of lying waste; or the Russian boundary should be drawn east of the Dniester, no fortress being constructed in the ceded territory.[1] It is worth noting that the Turkish envoy at Berlin thought these terms satisfactory. Fawkener was to agree to the third and least desirable alternative only in case Austria proved obdurate. But in this respect he was allowed a certain latitude, provided that Turkey retained adequate means of defence on that side. In order to avoid any appearance of menace, the British fleet was not to enter the Baltic or the Black Sea, a resolve much resented at Berlin and Warsaw.[2]

Frederick William received Fawkener most cordially at Sans Souci on 11th May. He showed some concern at the Manchester petition to Pitt, as it would stiffen the tone of the Czarina; he urged the sending of a British squadron to the Black Sea to ward off the threatened attack on Constantinople, and stated his preference for the third of the alternatives named by Grenville. Fawkener therefore felt bound to place it first in his proposals to the Czarina: and it is noteworthy that Prussian diplomacy once again favoured a concession to Catharine larger than Pitt was disposed to grant. Inward satisfaction at the course of events was, as usual, accompanied by many sneers at the weakness of British policy.[3] Gustavus of Sweden adopted a similar tone. He assured Liston of his readiness to receive the British fleet and to arm against Russia, provided that the Allies would grant him the needful subsidies. Liston, knowing his shiftiness, received these offers with polite incredulity. Certainly they had no effect at Whitehall.

Pitt's change of front ruined his influence in the North;[4] and in diplomacy prestige counts for so much that Catharine had

[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 21. Ewart to Grenville, 13th May.

[2] "F. O.," Russia, 21. Grenville to Fawkener, 6th May; "F. O.," Poland, 5. Hailes to Grenville, 19th May. Yet as late as 6th July Grenville informed Ewart that in the last resort England would fight on behalf of Prussia, though Ewart was to work hard to avert war ("Dropmore P.," ii, 124).

[3] "Dropmore P.," ii, 93, 94. Ewart to Grenville, 8th June. Hertzberg's influence was lessened by the addition of Schulenberg and Alvensleben to the Foreign Department at Berlin early in May.

[4] B.M. Add. MSS., 34437. Liston to Grenville, 27th May 1791.

virtually won her case by the end of May. Fawkener arrived at St. Petersburg on 24th May, and soon found himself involved in a series of gorgeous fêtes which proclaimed the wealth and power of the Empress and her entire indifference to all that England might do. For the irksome details of business he was referred to the Ministers and Prince Potemkin. The latter boasted in his lordly way of his resolve to seize Constantinople, wage eternal war on the miscreant Turks, and finally conquer Egypt. After a delay of three weeks the Empress received Fawkener graciously at a ball; she assured him of her admiration of Burke's "Reflections" on the French Revolution, and expressed her horror of that event as well as her regret at the sympathy of Fox with it. She petted her grandson, Alexander, and ostentatiously avoided all reference to the subject of Fawkener's mission, except that, when a dog chanced opportunely to bark, she said, "Dogs that bark do not always bite." So matters dragged on, it being the aim of Catharine to gain another success on the Danube, to win over Leopold definitely to her side (as Fawkener found to be the case by 21st June), and to sow discord among Britons.[1]

In this last she achieved a startling success. On 17th June there arrived at St. Petersburg Mr. (afterwards Sir) Robert Adair, who later on was to figure as a diplomatist under the Ministry of Fox and that of All the Talents. We may accept his solemn declaration, in a letter written in the year 1842, that Fox had no hand in sending him on this so-called "mission";[2] but we are able to correct Adair's version in several respects, from documents in the "Pitt Papers," which Bishop Tomline, when challenged by Adair, thought fit to withhold.[3]

Adair asserted in 1842 that his object in going to Russia was not to oppose Pitt's policy of recovering Oczakoff, because that Minister had already renounced it in obedience to the mandate of Parliament. This, as we have seen, is incorrect; for when

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[1] "F. O.," Russia, 21. Fawkener and Whitworth to Grenville, 19th, 27th, 31st May, 18th and 21st June. So, too, Ewart wrote to Grenville, on 18th June (after receiving news from St. Petersburg): "No answer will be given (by the Russian Ministers) to the Allies till after the return of the last messenger to London, for the purpose of knowing if they might rely with certainty on the English Government being unable to take active measures in any case" ("F. O.," Prussia, 21).

[2] "Memorials of Fox," ii, 383-7.

[3] Pitt MSS., 337; Tomline, iii, 308-12.

Adair left England, in May 1791, warlike preparations were still going on.[1] He admits that Fox said to him before starting, "Well: if you are determined to go, send us all the news"; and that Fox provided him with a cipher so that that news might elude the prying eyes of British diplomatists. It may be, as Adair says, that he and he alone was accountable for this odd attempt to direct the foreign policy of his country. But it is highly probable that Vorontzoff (Woronzow), the Russian ambassador in London, abetted the scheme. On 2nd May Whitworth wrote that Vorontzoff's despatches had given great satisfaction at the Russian capital. "He assures his Court that Russia has many friends and partisans in England, and affirms pretty positively that His Majesty's Ministry will have no small difficulty in carrying through their measures contrary to the interest of the country."[2] Further, the account of Adair's "mission," given by William Lindsay, Whitworth's secretary, states that Adair came with strong letters of recommendation from Vorontzoff, while the Duchess of Devonshire commended him to Whitworth. He travelled *viâ* Vienna, where he stayed with the Russian ambassador. At St. Petersburg he at first received countenance from the British embassy, owing to the high recommendations which he brought with him, and he was presented at Court by Whitworth himself!

Thus Adair found his path everywhere strewn with flowers. Catharine smiled on him and plied him with important questions, ironically asking him whether the British fleet had set sail. Fawkener, on the other hand, she treated with marked coldness. The British embassy, however, had its revenge; for Lindsay opened the letters, which Adair trustfully asked him to take to London, and apparently was able to decipher the ciphered parts, which gave hints to Fox for an attack on Pitt. But Adair was more than a purveyor of hints for the Whig orators. It is clear that he stiffened the resistance of the Russian Government. "He shows," so Whitworth wrote privately to Grenville, on 21st July, "the most virulent opposition to His

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"Auckland Journals," ii, 388.

[2] "F. O.," Russia, 20. 2nd May. "I have long thought Woronzow decidedly and personally hostile to the present Government in England, and am persuaded that he suggested the idea of employing Mr. Adair as an envoy from Mr. Fox to the Empress." Grenville to Auckland, 1st August 1791. (B.M. Add. MSS., 34439.)

Majesty's measures, and takes great pains to counteract the negotiation."[1] In official documents Whitworth and Fawkener depict him as a vain, meddlesome, ignorant person, concerned with stockjobbing no less than with diplomacy. But it is certain that his presence at St. Petersburg, and the biassed information which he supplied, greatly harmed the cause of the Allies; and Pitt, after seeing copies of Adair's letters, was justified in hinting that his action had prejudiced the success of Britain's efforts at St. Petersburg. As for Fox, Catharine showed her regard for him by placing his bust between those of Demosthenes and Cicero in her palace; and Adair, on his departure, received from the hands of Potemkin a ring containing her miniature.[2]

Such is the story of this singular "mission." Even before its details were fully known at Whitehall, Ministers debated whether they should not take action against Adair. On 29th July Grenville wrote to Auckland, *à propos* also of a recent letter of Fox to Barnave: "Is not the idea of Ministers from Opposition to the different Courts of Europe a new one in this country? I never heard of it before, and should think that, if it can be proved, I mean legally proved, it would go very near to an impeachable misdemeanour."[3] Ministers, however, decided to treat Adair's "mission" with the silence of contempt. Probably their judgement was correct; for the *finesse* of Vorontzoff and Catharine, if fully revealed to the world, would have covered the Opposition with obloquy, but the Cabinet with ridicule; and in politics the latter alternative is more to be feared. Apart, therefore, from one scornfully vague reference by Pitt to the damage done to the nation's interests by a partisan intrigue at St. Petersburg, little was heard of the affair.

The reader who wades through the dreary debates on the Russian Question early in 1792 will probably conclude that Adair's tour belongs to the annals, not of diplomacy, but of electioneering.[4] Fox, Grey, Sheridan, and Whitbread proved to their own satisfaction, from Russian sources of information, that Pitt, besides wasting the public money on futile preparations for war, had been outwitted and publicly flouted by the Czarina. They did not prove that the occasion called for no effort to curb her ambition, or that Pitt was not justified in taking up the challenge which their factious conduct had emboldened her to fling down. In one sense it is unfortunate that the Foxites did not make further diplomatic excursions; for the result might have been the addition of interesting gargoyles to the edifice of the party system in the form of Opposition embassies, worked by fallen Ministers, disappointed place-hunters, and discharged clerks.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34438.

[2] "F. O.," Russia, 22. Whitworth to Grenville, 5th August.

[3] B.M. Add. MSS., 34438. Wraxall (i, 202; ii, 34) thought Fox deserved impeachment for sending Adair.

[4] "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 849-1000. Whitbread's motion was finally negatived by 244 to 116 (1st March 1792).

Meanwhile other events were working against Pitt. The successes of the Russian arms had been crowned by the capture of Anapa, near the River Kuban, and their triumph seemed assured both in Asia and Europe. The Russian Black Sea fleet was preparing to deal a blow at Constantinople; and, for a time, as we have seen, the Turks were distracted by the prospect of the renewal of war with Austria.

Yet here again, by one of those sudden turns of fortune which have so often saved the Ottoman Empire, the designs of the Viennese Court were cut short. At Padua, during his Italian tour, the Emperor Leopold heard the news of the capture of the King and Queen of France by the rabble of Varennes. This ignominious ending of his schemes for a counter-revolution in France stirred the sluggish blood of the Emperor. On 6th July he wrote to his brother Maximilian that it was high time to save Marie Antoinette and stifle the French plague. A forward policy in the West implied moderation in the East, and even the Prussophobe Chancellor, Kaunitz, saw the need of a definite peace with the Sultan. Accordingly, Austria waived her demands for parts of Wallachia and Servia, and made peace with the Porte at Sistova on 4th August, on condition of receiving Old Orsova.[1] Thus the Varennes incident, which involved the royalist cause in ruin, brought salvation to the Moslems.

The desire of Leopold to crush the French Revolution was to have far-reaching consequences, which will concern us later. Here we may remark that the woes of Marie Antoinette and the *volte-face* of the Emperor produced a marked effect at St. Petersburg. Hitherto, all had been bluster and defiance. So late as 15th July Fawkener reported that the Empress had lately seemed inclined to conquer and keep all that she could; but the news from France impelled the Vice-Chancellor, Ostermann, to declare that all animosities should now be laid aside and "that every nation in Europe should unite [against France] whenever any proper plan could be agreed on."[2] Thus, here again, the failure of the royalist attempt in France helped to avert the utter breakdown of the Anglo-Prussian case. Even so, the Czarina won the day at nearly every point. Little by little the Allies gave up all the safeguards on which Pitt had at first insisted; and on 26th July their envoys consented to the acquisition by Russia of all the Turkish lands east of the Dniester, provided that the Czarina agreed not to hinder the navigation of that river. On the whole, the Porte sustained no very serious loss, considering the collapse of its defence, the slight interest felt on its behalf both at London and Berlin, and the marked dislike of Catharine for England and Prussia. She hated Pitt, but she despised Frederick William. How then could she, in the midst of her military triumphs, give way to the demands of the Triple Alliance, whose inner weakness she had probed?

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[1] Vivenot, i, 547; Martens, v, 244-9.

Nevertheless, the intervention of the Allies was not the failure that has often been represented. It checked the soaring ambitions of Potemkin. The Roumans, Bulgars, and Greeks had to thank the Allies for delivering them from this selfish adventurer. Their day of liberation was deferred, but it came ultimately in far better guise than as a gift from Catharine and her favourite. Strange to say, he fell a victim to fever, and expired by the roadside in Moldavia as he was proceeding to the front; and this event, which wrung the heart of Catharine, had no small share in facilitating the signature of the Russo-Turkish treaty (on the terms required by the Allies) at Jassy early in the following year.

Other influences were leading Catharine towards peace. In the spring of the year 1791 Poland entered on a new lease of life. That the Poles should alter their constitution without her permission was a grievous affront, for which she inveighed against them as rebels. Thenceforth Warsaw, rather than Constantinople, took the first place in her thoughts. Apart from this, the prospects of the Poles were radiant with promise; and the student who peruses the despatches of Hailes, British

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34438.

envoy at Warsaw, cannot but picture the results that might have occurred had the Poles received adequate support from Prussia and England against the Muscovites. The confederated Diet at Warsaw then showed a reforming zeal equal to that of the French National Assembly. In the middle of April it struck off the shackles from the burghers and made them citizens. Early in May, when the political horizon darkened, fear cowed even the Russophiles, while a storm of patriotic fervour swayed the Diet, and burst through the two barriers which hemmed in the national life. There was no hubbub in this memorable sitting. No swords flashed forth, as had happened on many a petty pretext. Emotion held the Assembly spellbound, while the majority swept away those curses of the land, serfdom and the elective kingship. Thereupon one of the leading obstructives aroused general astonishment by proposing that members should swear to uphold the new order of things. King Stanislaus evinced his patriotic zeal by calling on the Bishop of Cracow to administer the oath, which deputies and visitors alike recorded with shouts of joy. The exulting throng of nationalists and their recent converts then sallied forth and took the oath once more at the foot of the high altar of the Cathedral; and the sullen dissidence of some thirty of Russia's henchmen served but to emphasize the overwhelming triumph of intelligence and patriotism.[1]

Such was the peaceful Revolution of 3rd May 1791 at Warsaw. It sent a thrill of exultation through France, and moved Burke to a splendid panegyric, which he crowned with the startling statement that the events at Warsaw were probably the purest good ever conferred upon mankind.[2] Even Grenville's cold and insular nature warmed and dilated at the news; and he bade Hailes express the interest of Great Britain in the new constitution, especially as it would benefit the cause of the Allies.[3]

But the ill fortune which dogged the steps of the Poles willed that in this time of their revival the Alliance, from which alone they could hope for safety, should go to pieces. The refusal of England to send a fleet either to the Baltic or the Black Sea depressed the influence of England at Berlin. "Oh! how my blood boils, my dear Sir," wrote Ewart to Keith on 18th June. "Our influence was all powerful so long as it was maintained with the necessary vigour; and the moment we flinched, all the Powers, as if by common consent, turned the tables upon us."[1] This proved to be the case. The web of Ewart's diplomacy, the toil of four years, which connected England with Prussia, Sweden, Poland, and Turkey, was unravelled in as many weeks. The general trend of events helped on the work of dissolution; and among the sinister influences at Berlin, jealousy of the reviving power of Poland played no small part. Hertzberg, whose fortunes were now on the decline, sought to postpone his fall (it came early in July) by exciting animosity against the Courts of London and Warsaw. To his reckless charge against Pitt, of seeking to ruin Prussia by a war against the Muscovites, he now added a jeremiad against the Polish reformers of Warsaw—"The Poles have just dealt the *coup de grace* to the Prussian monarchy by making their kingdom hereditary and adopting a constitution better than that of England."[2] Dislike of its Allies was now the prevalent feeling at the Prussian Court, and by the end of June Frederick William decided to have an interview with Leopold for the purpose of coming to a friendly understanding.[3]

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[1] "F. O.," Poland, 5. Hailes to Grenville, 5th May, along with a letter by a Polish deputy.

[2] Burke, "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs." Burke did not see that by fighting Russia's battle in Parliament, he was helping to undermine the liberties of Poland.

[3] "F. O.," Poland, 5. Grenville to Hailes, 25th May.

This resolve, fraught with evil for Poland, was clinched by the news of the capture of the King and Queen of France at Varennes. Concern at their ignominious position now began to influence the Central and Eastern Powers. The wrath of the Czarina fell upon French democrats; for in the nature of this extraordinary woman sentiment and passion always ran an even race with foresight and reason. In her present mood the French Revolution and all its abettors were anathema. The results were curious. The bust of Voltaire was deposed from its place of honour and huddled away amidst lumber. Within a short space the bust of Fox, now that he had served her purpose, shared the same fate. More important, perhaps, if less striking to the imagination, is the fact that she now formed a close alliance with Sweden. Early in October Gustavus III ended his long balancings by espousing the side of Russia, with a view to eventual action against France.[1] The decline or collapse of the Anglo-Prussian Alliance followed as a matter of course so soon as Frederick decided to clasp the hand of Leopold. It is curious to find Pitt and Grenville, even at the end of August 1791, seeking to include Austria in the Triple Alliance, when statesmen at Berlin and Vienna were scoffing at England, and were adopting an offensive policy at variance with the pacific aims cherished at Whitehall. Kaunitz and Bischoffswerder looked about for a scape-goat, and found him in Joseph Ewart. Auckland had also been making a dead set at this able ambassador; and some hitch in the negotiations attending the marriage of the Duke of York with the eldest daughter of the King of Prussia served to increase his troubles at this time. But the following hopeful letter which Pitt wrote to him on 2nd September must have salved his mental wounds:

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[1] "Keith Mems.," ii, 448, 449.

[2] Dembinski, i, 451. Hertzberg to Lucchesini, 7th May 1791.

[3] "F. O.," Prussia, 21. Ewart to Grenville, 25th June. For Bischoffswerder's second mission to Vienna see Sybel, bk. ii, ch. vi.

> . . . Many events have certainly concurred to disappoint the accomplishment of very important objects, and to produce in some respects an unfavourable change both in Prussia and elsewhere. But the general state of Europe, taking in the whole, affords so favourable a prospect to this country that we have great reason to be contented. Any temporary fluctuation in the disposition at Berlin is therefore, at the moment, of less consequence. The connection between Prussia and Austria, whatever right we have to complain of the steps which have led to it, cannot, I think, produce any permanent mischief to our system; and, at least, I am convinced that the best chance of preventing it is to mark no suspicion on our part to preserve as much good humour and cordiality as possible. For the rest, in the singular and uncertain state of Europe, our chief business must be to watch events and keep ourselves quiet. I have been sincerely concerned not to have more favourable accounts of your health. . . . .

The prospects, so far as concerned the freedom of Poland and the peace of the West, were worse than Pitt anticipated. Ewart foresaw the course of events more correctly. A little later he obtained the recall for which he had some time been pressing; but he had the mortification of seeing Morton Eden, the brother of his rival, Lord Auckland, installed in his place. He retired to Bath for treatment by his brother, a medical man; but an internal disease of long standing developed very suddenly on

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[1] Martens, v, 262-71.

25th January 1792, and ended his life two days later amidst delirium. The details, as set forth in the family papers, show that the delirium of his last hours was the outcome of acute internal troubles, which resembled appendicitis. They serve also to refute the wild rumours that Ewart went raving mad as a result of political disappointments, or that he was poisoned by some Russian agent.[1] The last letter which Pitt wrote to this brilliant but most unfortunate diplomatist shows a chivalrous desire to screen him from needless anxiety:

> Downing Street, *Jan.* 20, 1792.[2]
>
> Your letter having come at a time of very particular engagement, it was impossible for me to answer it sooner. Your recollection of what pass'd between the Duke of York and yourself is certainly different from the manner in which I am told that H.R.H. understands it; but no difficulty whatever will arise from this circumstance in settling the business; nor do I see any reason for your entertaining any apprehension of its producing any consequences disagreeable to yourself. I am very sorry that you should already have felt so much on the subject. The train in which the business now is will, I am in hopes, relieve you from any further anxiety or trouble respecting it, and makes it wholly unnecessary to dwell further upon it.

Worse than private misfortunes was the blow dealt to the Polish cause. The rebuff encountered by the Allies at St. Petersburg deeply depressed the reformers of Warsaw. On the return of Fawkener through the Polish capital, King Stanislaus expressed grave concern at the abandonment of all the safeguards for Turkey and Poland on which Pitt had at first insisted. The cession to Russia of all the land up to the Dniester seemed to him to presage ruin to the Poles—"Nor did my pointing out [added Hailes] the attention which had been paid to their interests by the preservation of the liberty of the Dniester produce any advantageous effect."[3] In truth, Stanislaus knew Catharine well enough to see in her triumph the doom of his kingdom.[1] Just as the ascendancy which she acquired over Turkey by the Treaty of Kainardji led naturally, perhaps inevitably, to the First Partition of Poland, so now the principle of the Balance of Power impelled Austria and Prussia to look about for lands that would compensate them for the expansion of Russia. Those lands could be found most easily in Poland, less easily in France. So it came about that the principle which Pitt invoked for the greater security of the smaller States, became in the hands of Catharine and her powerful neighbours a pretext for schemes of aggrandisement and pillage.

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[1] I am indebted to Major-General Sir Spencer Ewart for these particulars and for permission to copy and publish these letters of Pitt. The poison story first became current in one of Fox's letters published in the "Mems. of Fox." For letters of Dr. Ewart at Bath on his brother's affairs see "Dropmore P.," ii, 181, 253, 256.

[2] Pitt MSS., 102.

[3] "F. O.," Poland, 5. Hailes to Grenville, 21st August 1791.

Thus fell to pieces the "federative system," whereby Pitt hoped to group the weaker States around England and Prussia. The scheme was due in the first instance to Ewart. Pitt adopted it when he believed the time to be ripe; but he postponed action too long. Had he pushed his plans forward in the autumn of 1790, as soon as the dispute with Spain was settled, and maintained the naval armaments at their full strength, he would probably have gained a peaceful triumph over Catharine. In that case the accession of Poland, Sweden, and Turkey to the Triple Alliance would naturally have followed. There would then have been no invasion of France by Austria and Prussia; still less would there have been any spoliation of Poland. The practical manner in which the Poles reformed their commonwealth opened up vast possibilities for the east of Europe; and the crushing of those hopes under the heel of a remorseless militarism is probably the severest loss which the national principle has sustained in modern times.

Nevertheless, though Pitt showed a lack of nerve at the crisis, yet, in view of the duplicity of Prussia, the doubtful attitude of Leopold and Gustavus, the marvellous resourcefulness of Catharine, and the factious opposition of the Whigs, he cannot be blamed. At times, new and subtle influences warp the efforts of statesmen. This was so in the year 1791. Pitt was striving to build on the basis of the Balance of Power. But that well-trodden ground now began to heave under the impact of forces mightier than those wielded by monarchs and chancellors. Democracy sent out its thrills from Paris as a centre, and the gaze of statesmen was turned from the East to the West. Thenceforth the instinct of self-preservation or of greed marshalled the continental chanceries against the two reforming States. The "Zeitgeist" breathed against the plans of Pitt, and they were not. In their place there came others of a far different kind, inspired by hopes of territorial gains in Poland and the overthrow of liberty in France.

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[1] Herrmann, "Geschichte Russlands," vi, 445.

PART II

WILLIAM PITT AND THE GREAT WAR

WILLIAM PITT AND THE GREAT WAR

CHAPTER I

ROYALISTS AND RADICALS[1]

Détruire l'anarchie française, c'est se préparer une gloire immortelle.—CATHARINE II, 1791.

The pretended Rights of Man, which have made this havoc, cannot be the rights of the people. For to be a people and to have these rights are incompatible. The one supposes the presence, the other the absence, of a state of civil society.—BURKE, *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.*

A constitution is the property of a nation and not of those who exercise the Government.—T. PAINE, *Rights of Man*, part ii.

IN the midst of a maze of events there may sometimes be found one which serves as a clue, revealing hidden paths, connecting ways which seem far apart, and leading to a clear issue. Such was the attempted flight of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette to the eastern frontier of France at midsummer 1791, which may be termed the central event of the French Revolution, at least in its first phases. The aim of joining the armed bands of *émigrés* and the forces held in readiness by Austria was so obvious as to dispel the myth of "a patriot King" misled for a time by evil counsellors. True, the moderates, from sheer alarm, still sought to save the monarchy, and for a time with surprising success. But bolder men, possessed both of insight and humour, perceived the futility of all such efforts to hold down on the throne the father of his people lest he should again run away. In this perception the young Republican party found its genesis and its inspiration. In truth, the attempted flight of the King was a death-blow to the moderate party, into which the lamented leader, Mirabeau, had sought to infuse some of his masterful energy. Thenceforth, the future belonged either to the Jacobins or to the out and out royalists.

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[1] I am perfectly aware that the term "Radical" (in its first form, "Radical Reformer") does not appear until a few years later; but I use it here and in the following chapters because there is no other word which expresses the same meaning.

These last saw the horizon brighten in the East. Louis XVI being under constraint in Paris, their leaders were the French Princes, the Comte de Provence (afterwards Louis XVIII) and the Comte d'Artois (Charles X). Around them at Coblentz there clustered angry swarms of French nobles, gentlemen, and orthodox priests, whose zeal was reckoned by the earliness of the date at which they had "emigrated." For many months the agents of these *émigrés* had vainly urged the Chanceries of the Continent to a royalist crusade against the French rebels; and it seemed appropriate that Gustavus III of Sweden should be their only convert. Now of a sudden their demands appeared, instinct with statecraft; and courtiers everywhere exclaimed that "the French pest" must be stamped out. In that thought lay in germ a quarter of a century of war.

Already the Prussian and Austrian Governments had vaguely discussed the need of a joint intervention in France. In fact this subject formed one of the pretexts for the missions of the Prussian envoy, Bischoffswerder, to the Emperor Leopold in February and June 1791.[1] As was shown at the close of the former volume, "William Pitt and National Revival," neither Court took the matter seriously, the Eastern Question being then their chief concern. But the flight to Varennes, which Leopold had helped to arrange, imposed on him the duty of avenging the ensuing insults to his sister. He prepared to do so with a degree of caution highly characteristic of him. He refused to move until he knew the disposition of the Powers, especially of England. From Padua, where the news of the capture of Louis at Varennes reached him, he wrote an autograph letter to George III, dated 6th July, urging him to join in a general demand for the liberation of the King and Queen of France. He also invited the monarchs of Europe to launch a Declaration, that they regarded the cause of Louis as their own, and in the last resort to put down a usurpation of power which it behoved all Governments to repress.[1]

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[1] See Vivenot, i, 176-81; Beer, "Leopold II, Franz II, und Catharina," 140 *et seq.*; Clapham, "Causes of the War of 1792," ch. iv.

The reply of George, dated St. James's, 23rd July, bears the imprint of the cool and cautious personality of Pitt and Grenville, who in this matter may be counted as one. The King avowed his sympathy with the French Royal Family and his interest in the present proposals, but declared that his attitude must depend on his relations to other Powers. He therefore cherished the hope that the Emperor would consult the welfare of the whole of Europe by aiding in the work of pacification between Austria and Turkey now proceeding at Sistova. So soon as those negotiations were completed, he would instruct his Ministers to consider the best means of cementing a union between the Allies and the Emperor.[2]

Leopold must have gnashed his teeth on reading this reply, which beat him at his own game of *finesse*. He had used the difficulties of England as a means of escaping from the pledges plighted at the Conference of Reichenbach in July 1790. Pitt and Grenville retorted by ironically refusing all help until he fulfilled those pledges. As we have seen, they succeeded; and the pacification in the East, as also in Belgium, was the result.

Equally chilling was the conduct of Pitt towards the *émigrés*. The French Princes at Coblentz had sent over the former French Minister, Calonne, "to solicit from His Majesty an assurance of his neutrality in the event . . . of an attempt being made by the Emperor and other Powers in support of the royal party in France." Pitt and Grenville refused to receive Calonne, and sent to the Comte d'Artois a letter expressing sympathy with the situation of the King and Queen of France, but declining to give any promise as to the line of conduct which the British Government might pursue.[3]

No less vague were the terms in which George III replied to a letter of the King of Sweden. Gustavus had for some little time been at Aix-la-Chapelle in the hope of leading a royalist crusade into France as a sequel to the expected escape of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. As readers of Carlyle will remember, the Swedish noble, Count Fersen, chivalrously helped their flight towards Metz; and deep was the chagrin of Gustavus and his squire on hearing the news from Varennes. They longed to strike at once. But how could they strike while Leopold, Catharine, and Frederick William declared that everything must depend on the action of England? The following significant sentence in Fersen's diary shows the feeling prevalent at Brussels, as elsewhere, respecting England: "We must know if that Power regards the continuation of anarchy in France as more advantageous than order."[1] Fersen had imbibed this notion at Brussels from Count Mercy d'Argenteau, the Austrian Minister, whose letters often harp on this string. Thus on 7th March 1791 he writes: "The worst obstacles for the King of France will always come from England, which wishes to prolong the horrors in France and ruin her." A little later he avers that the only way to save the French monarchy is by a civil war, "and England (unless won over) will support the popular party."[2]

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34438; Vivenot, i, 185, 186. "He [the Emperor] was extremely agitated when he gave me the letter for the King" (Elgin to Grenville, 7th July, in "Dropmore P.," ii, 126).

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 34438.

[3] *Ibid.* Grenville to Ewart, 26th July. Calonne for some little time resided at Wimbledon House. His letters to Pitt show that he met with frequent rebuffs; but he had one interview with him early in June 1790. I have found no details of it.

In order to win Pitt over to the cause of neutrality from which he never intended to swerve, Gustavus and Fersen persuaded an Englishman named Crawford to proceed to London with letters for George III and Pitt, dated 22nd July.[3] To the King he described the danger to all Governments which must ensue if the French revolted with impunity. He therefore begged to know speedily whether His Majesty would accord full liberty "to the Princes of Germany and to those, who, owing to the long distance, can only arrive by sea."[4] Evidently, then, Gustavus feared lest England might stop the fleet in which he intended to convey Swedish and Russian troops to the coast of Normandy for a dash at Paris. The answer of George soothed these fears, and that of Pitt, dated August 1791, was a model of courtly complaisance.

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[1] "Diary and Corresp. of Fersen," 121.

[2] Arneth, "Marie Antoinette, Joseph II, und Leopold II," 148, 152.

[3] Mr. Nisbet Bain (*op. cit.*, ii, 129) accuses Pitt and his colleagues of waiving aside a proposed visit of Gustavus III to London, because "they had no desire to meet face to face a monarch they had already twice deceived. Mr. Bain must refer to the charges (invented at St. Petersburg) that Pitt had egged Gustavus on to war against Russia, and then deserted him. In the former volume (chapters xxi-iii) I proved the falsity of those charges. It would be more correct to say that Gustavus deserted England.

[4] B.M. Add. MSS., 34438.

Compared with the shrewd balancings of the Emperor Leopold and the cold neutrality of Pitt, the policy of Frederick William II of Prussia seemed for a time to be instinct with generosity. Despite the fears of his counsellors that a *rapprochement* to Austria would involve Prussia in the ruin which the friendship of the Hapsburgs had brought on France, the King turned eagerly towards Vienna; and on 25th July Kaunitz and Bischoffswerder signed a preliminary treaty of alliance mutually guaranteeing their territories, and agreeing to further the aims of the Emperor respecting France. Frederick William was on fire for the royalist crusade. He even assured Baron Rolle, the agent of the French princes, that something would be done in that season.[1] Pitt and Grenville disapproved the action of Prussia in signing this compact, impairing as it did the validity of the Anglo-Prussian alliance of the year 1788; but Frederick William peevishly asserted his right to make what treaties he thought good, and remarked that he was now quits with England for the bad turns she had played him.[2] On their side, the British Ministers, by way of marking their disapproval of the warlike counsels of Berlin and Vienna, decided not to send an envoy to Pilnitz, the summer abode of the Elector of Saxony, where a conference was arranged between Leopold and Frederick William.

As is well known, the Comte d'Artois and Calonne now cherished lofty hopes of decisive action by all the monarchs against the French rebels. But Leopold, with his usual caution, repelled alike the solicitations of Artois and the warlike counsels of Frederick William, the result of their deliberations being the famous Declaration of Pilnitz (27th August). In it they expressed the hope that all the sovereigns of Europe

> will not refuse to employ, in conjunction with their said Majesties, the most efficient means in proportion to their resources, to place the King of France in a position to establish with the most absolute freedom, the foundations of a monarchical form of government, which shall at once be in harmony with the rights of sovereigns and promote the welfare of the French nation. In that case [*alors et dans ce cas*] their

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[1] Martens, v, 236-9; "F. O.," Prussia, 22. Ewart to Grenville, 4th August.

[2] On 15th August Prussia renounced her alliance with Turkey (Vivenot, i, 225).

said Majesties, the Emperor and the King of Prussia, are resolved to act promptly and in common accord with the forces necessary to attain the desired common end.

Obviously, the gist of the whole Declaration lay in the words *alors et dans ce cas.* If they be emphasized, they destroy the force of the document; for a union of all the monarchs was an impossibility, it being well known that England would not, and Sardinia, and Naples (probably also Spain) could not, take up arms. In fact, on that very evening Leopold wrote to Kaunitz that he had not in the least committed himself.—"*Alors et dans ce cas* is with me the law and the prophets. If England fails us, the case is non-existent." Further, when the Comte d'Artois, two days later, urged the Emperor to give effect to the Declaration by ordering his troops to march westwards, he sent a sharp retort, asserted that he would not go beyond the Declaration, and forbade the French Princes to do so.[1]

To the good sense and insight of Grenville and Pitt, the Pilnitz Declaration was one of the *comédies augustes* of history, as Mallet du Pan termed it. Grenville saw that Leopold would stay his hand until England chose to act, meanwhile alleging her neutrality as an excuse for doing nothing.[2] Thus, the resolve of Catharine to give nothing but fair words being already surmised, the *émigrés* found to their annoyance that Pitt's passivity clogged their efforts—the chief reason why they shrilly upbraided him for his insular egotism. Certainly his attitude was far from romantic; but surely, after the sharp lesson which he had received from the House of Commons in the spring of 1791 during the dispute with Russia, caution was needful; and he probably discerned a truth hidden from the *émigrés*, that an invasion of France for the rescue of the King and Queen would seal their doom and increase the welter in that unhappy land.

Pitt and Grenville spent the middle of September at Weymouth in attendance on George III; and we can imagine their satisfaction at the prospect of universal peace and prosperity. Pitt consoled himself for the not very creditable end to the Russian negotiation by reflecting that our revenue was steadily rising. "We are already £178,000 gainers in this quarter," he wrote to George Rose on 10th August.[3] In fact, the cyclonic disturbances of the past few years now gave place to a lull. The Russo-Turkish War had virtually ended; Catharine and Gustavus were on friendly terms; the ferment in the Hapsburg dominions had died down, except in Brabant; the Poles were working their new constitution well; and, but for Jacobin propaganda in Italy and the Rhineland, the outlook was serene.

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[1] Sybel, bk. ii, ch. vi; Vivenot, i, 235, 243.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 192.

[3] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 111.

At this time, too, there seemed a chance of a reconciliation between Louis XVI and his people. On 14th September he accepted the new democratic constitution, a step which filled France with rejoicing and furnished the desired excuse for Leopold to remain passive. Kaunitz, who had consistently opposed intervention in France, now asserted that Louis had voluntarily accepted the constitution. The action of Louis and Marie Antoinette was in reality forced. Amidst the Queen's expressions of contempt for the French Princes at Coblentz, the suppressed fire of her fury against her captors flashes forth in this sentence written to Mercy d'Argenteau (28th August)—"The only question for us is to lull them to sleep and inspire them with confidence so as to trick them the better afterwards."—And again (12th September)—"My God! Must I, with this blood in my veins, pass my days among such beings as these, and in such an age as this?" Leopold must have known her real feelings; but he chose to abide by the official language of Louis, and to advise the Powers to accept the new situation.[1]

This peaceful turn of affairs sorely troubled the French Princes and Burke. In August and September 1791 his son Richard was at Coblentz, and informed his father of the consternation of the *émigrés* on hearing that the Emperor declined to draw the sword. Burke himself was equally agitated, and on or about 24th September had a long interview with Pitt and Grenville, at the house of the latter. We gather from Burke's "Letters on the Conduct of our Domestic Parties," that it was the first time he had met Pitt in private; and the meeting must have been somewhat awkward. After dining, with Grenville as host, the three men conferred together till eleven o'clock, discussing the whole situation "very calmly" (says Burke); but we can fancy the tumult of feelings in the breast of the old man when he found both Ministers firm as adamant against intervention in France. "They are certainly right as to their general inclinations," he wrote to his son, "perfectly so, I have not a shadow of doubt; but at the same time they are cold and dead as to any attempt whatsoever to give them effect." The heat of the Irish royalist failed to kindle a spark of feeling in the two cousins. He found that their "deadness" proceeded from a rooted distrust of the Emperor Leopold, and from a conviction that Britain had nothing to fear from Jacobinical propaganda. Above all they believed that the present was not the time for action, especially as the imminence of bankruptcy in France would discredit the new Legislative Assembly, and render an invasion easier in the near future.

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[1] Arneth, 206, 210; Vivenot i, 270.

Are we to infer from this that Pitt and his cousin looked forward to a time when the monarchs could invade France with safety? Such an inference would be rash. It is more probable that they here found an excuse for postponing their decision and a means of calming an insistent visitor. Certainly they impressed Burke with a belief in their sincere but secret sympathy with the royalist cause. The three men also agreed in suspecting Leopold, though Burke tried to prove that his treachery was not premeditated, but sprang from "some complexional inconstancy." Pitt and Grenville, knowing the doggedness with which the Emperor pushed towards his goal, amidst many a shift and turn, evidently were not convinced.

At this time they had special reasons for distrusting Leopold and his advisers. The Austrian Government had received a letter, dated Dresden, 27th August (the day of the Declaration of Pilnitz), stating that England promised to remain neutral only on condition that the Emperor would not withdraw any troops from his Belgic lands, as they were needed to uphold the arrangements of which she was a guarantee. This extraordinary statement grew out of a remark of Grenville to the Austrian Ambassador in London, that, in view of the unrest in the Netherlands, it might be well not to leave them without troops.[1] The mis-statement was not only accepted at Vienna, but was forwarded to various Courts, the final version being that England might attack Austria if she withdrew her troops from Flanders, and that therefore Leopold could not draw the sword against

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[1] Burke ("Corresp.," iii, 308, 342, 346) shows that Mercy d'Argenteau, after his brief mission to London, spread the slander. Pitt and Grenville said nothing decisive to him on this or any other topic. Kaunitz partly adopted the charge. (See Vivenot, i, 272.)

France until his army on the Turkish borders arrived in Swabia. Some were found who believed this odd *farrago*; but those who watched the calculating balance of Hapsburg policy saw in it one more excuse for a masterly inactivity.

Still less were our Ministers inclined to unite with Catharine in the universal royalist league then under discussion at St. Petersburg. The Czarina having charged her ambassador, Vorontzoff, to find out the sentiments of Pitt and Grenville on this subject, he replied that England would persevere in the strict neutrality which she had all along observed, "and that, with respect to the measures of active intervention which other Powers might have in contemplation, it was His Majesty's determination not to take any part either in supporting or in opposing them." Now Russia, like Austria and Spain, had decided not to act unless England joined the concert;[1] and this waiting on the action of a Power which had already declared its resolve to do nothing enables us to test the sincerity of the continental monarchs. As for the Czarina, her royalist fervour expended itself in deposing the busts of democrats, in ordering the French Minister to remain away from Court, and in condemning any Russian who had dealings with him to be publicly flogged. Moreover, while thus drilling her own subjects, the quondam friend of Diderot kept her eyes fixed upon Warsaw. The shrewdest diplomatist of the age had already divined her aims, which he thus trenchantly summed up: "The Empress only waits to see Austria and Prussia committed in France, to overturn everything in Poland."[2] Kaunitz lived on to see his cynical prophecy fulfilled to the letter.

The reader will have noticed with some surprise the statement of Burke that Pitt and Grenville had not the slightest fear of the spread of French principles in England. As we know, Burke vehemently maintained the contrary, averring that the French plague, unless crushed at Paris, would infect the world. In his survey of the European States he admitted that we were less liable to infection than Germany, Holland, and Italy, owing to the excellence of our constitution; but he feared that our nearness to France, and our zeal for liberty, would expose us to

[1] "F. O.," Russia, 22. Grenville to Whitworth, 27th October, and W. to G., 14th October 1791.

[2] Larivière, "Cath. II et la Rév. franç.," 88-90, 110-17.

some danger. Why he should have cherished these fears is hard to say; for to him the French Revolution was "a wild attempt to methodize anarchy," "a foul, impious, monstrous thing, wholly out of the course of moral nature."[1] Surely if British and French principles were so utterly different, we were in no more danger of infection from the Jacobins than of catching swine fever.

This was virtually the view of Pitt and Grenville; for there were no premonitory symptoms of infection, but much the reverse. Londoners showed the utmost joy at the first news of the escape of the King and Queen from Paris, and were equally depressed by the news from Varennes. As we shall presently see, it was with shouts of "Long live the King," "Church and State," "Down with the Dissenters," "No Olivers," "Down with the Rump," "No false Rights of Man," that the rabble of Birmingham wrecked and burnt the houses of Dr. Priestley and other prominent Nonconformists of that town. Only by slow degrees did this loyal enthusiasm give place to opinions which in course of time came to be called Radical. It may be well to trace briefly the fluctuations of public opinion, to which the career of Pitt stands in vital relation.

The growth of discontent in Great Britain may be ascribed to definite evils in the body politic, and it seems to have arisen only secondarily from French propaganda. The first question which kindled the fire of resentment was that of the civic and political disabilities still imposed on Nonconformists by the Corporation and Test Acts of the reign of Charles II. Pitt's decision in the session of 1787 to uphold those Acts ensured the rejection of Beaufoy's motion for their repeal of 176 votes to 98; but undeterred by his defeat, Beaufoy brought the matter before the House on 8th May 1789, and, despite the opposition of Pitt, secured 102 votes against 122. The Prime Minister's chief argument was that if Dissenters were admitted to civic rights they might use their power to overthrow the Church Establishment.[2] Clearly the opinion of the House was drifting away from him on that question; and it is a proof of his growing indifference to questions of Reform that now, four days after the assembly of the States-General of France at Versailles, he should have held to views so repugnant to the spirit of the age.

[1] Burke's "Works," iii, 8, 369 (Bohn edit.).

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxviii, 1-41.

Thenceforth that question could not be debated solely on its own merits. The attacks made by the French National Assembly on the Church of France, particularly the confiscation of its tithes and landed property, soon aroused heated feelings in this country, though on a subject of a wholly different kind. The result was that, while Dissenters peacefully agitated for permission to act as citizens, they were represented as endeavouring to despoil the Church, after the fashion of Talleyrand and Mirabeau. A work by a Manchester merchant, Thomas Walker, reveals the influence of this question on the political activities of the time. The Nonconformists of that town and county hoped to gain a majority in next session or in the following Parliament, while the High Churchmen, to the cry of "The Church in Danger," declared the two Acts of Charles II to be the bulwarks of the constitution.[1] This cry was everywhere taken up, with the result that in the Parliament elected in 1790 the Tories gained ground. Consequently, even the able advocacy of Fox on behalf of religious liberty failed to save Beaufoy's motion from a crushing defeat. Pitt spoke against the proposal and carried the House with him by 294 votes to 105. This vote illustrates the baleful influence exerted by the French Revolution on the cause of Reform in these islands.

A second example soon occurred. Only three days later Flood brought forward a motion for Parliamentary Reform which the wildest of alarmists could not call revolutionary. He proposed to add to the House of Commons one hundred members, elected by the resident householders of the counties, those areas being far less corrupt than the towns; and he suggested that, if the total number of members were deemed excessive, fifty seats in the smallest boroughs might be declared vacant. This proposal differed but little from that of Pitt in the session of 1785, which aimed at disfranchising thirty-six decayed boroughs and apportioning their seventy-two members to the larger counties, as also to London and Westminster. In a speech which might have been made by Pitt in pre-Revolution times Flood declared that the events in France showed the need of a timely repair of outworn institutions.

This was as a red rag to Windham, a prominent recruit from the Whigs, who now used all the artifices of rhetoric to terrify his hearers. He besought them in turn not to repair their house in the hurricane season, not to imitate the valetudinarian of the "Spectator," who read medical books until he discovered he had every symptom of the gout except the pain. These fallacious similes captivated the squires; and Pitt himself complimented the orator on his ingenious arguments. For himself, he declared his desire of Reform to be as zealous as ever; but he "could see no utility in any gentleman's bringing forward such a motion as the present at that moment," and feared that the cause might thereby suffer disgrace and lose ground. Fox, on the other hand, ridiculed all thought of panic on account of the French Revolution, but he admitted that the majority both in Parliament and the nation did not want Reform. Grenville, Wilberforce, and Burke opposed the motion, while even Duncombe declined to vote for it at present. It was accordingly adjourned *sine die.*[1]

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[1] T. Walker, "Review of . . . political events in Manchester (1789-1794)."

Disappointment at the course of these debates served to band Nonconformists and reformers in a close alliance. Hitherto they had alike supported Pitt and the royal prerogative, especially at the time of the Regency struggle. In May 1789, when Pitt opposed the Nonconformist claims, Dr. Priestley wrote that Fox would regain his popularity with Dissenters, while Pitt would lose ground.[2] Now, when the doors of the franchise and of civic privilege were fast barred, resentment and indignation began to arouse the groups of the unprivileged left outside. The news that Frenchmen had framed a Departmental System, in which all privileges had vanished, and all men were citizens, with equal rights in the making of laws and local regulations, worked potently in England, furthering the growth of an institution little known in this country, the political club. As the Jacobins had adapted the English idea of a club to political uses, so now the early Radicals re-adapted it to English needs. "The Manchester Constitutional Society"[3] was founded by

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[1] T. Walker, "Review of . . . political events in Manchester (1789-1794)," 452-79. I cannot agree with Mr. J. R. le B. Hammond ("Fox," 76) that Pitt now spoke as the avowed enemy of parliamentary reform. Indeed, he never spoke in that sense, but opposed it as inopportune.

[2] Rutt, "Mems. of Priestly," ii, 25. As is well known, Burke's "Reflections on the Fr. Rev.," was in part an answer to Dr. Price's sermon of 4th November 1789 in the Old Jewry chapel, to the Society for celebrating the Revolution of 1688.

[3] It was more of a club than the branches of the "Society for Con-

Walker and others in October 1790, in order to oppose a "Church and King Club," which High Churchmen had started in March, after the news of the triumph of their principles in Parliament. The Manchester reformers struck the key-note of the coming age by asserting in their programme that in every community the authority of the governors must be derived from the consent of the governed, and that the welfare of the people was the true aim of Government. They further declared that honours and rewards were due only for services rendered to the State; that all officials, without exception, were responsible to the people; that "actions only, not opinions, are the proper objects of civil jurisdictions"; that no law is fairly made except by a majority of the people; and that the people of Great Britain were not fully and fairly represented in Parliament.[1]

The Church and King Club, on the contrary, reprobated all change in "one of the most beautiful systems of government that the combined efforts of human wisdom has [*sic*] ever yet been able to accomplish." The issue between the two parties was thus sharply outlined. The Tories of Manchester gloried in a state of things which shut out about half of their fellow-citizens from civic rights and their whole community from any direct share in the making of laws. In their eyes the Church and the monarchy were in danger if Nonconformists became citizens, and if a score of Cornish villages yielded up their legislative powers to Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, and other hives of industry.

Scotland also began to awake. The torpor of that keen and intellectual people, under a system of misrepresentation which assigned to them forty-five members and forty-four to Cornwall, is incomprehensible, unless we may ascribe it to the waning of all enthusiasm after the "forty-five" and to the supremacy of material interests so characteristic of the age. In any case, this political apathy was now to end; and here, too, as in the case of England, Government applied the spur.

On 10th May 1791 Sir Gilbert Elliot (afterwards Earl of Minto) brought forward a motion in Parliament for the repeal of the Test Act, so far as it concerned Scotland. He voiced a

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stitutional Information," which did good work in 1780-4, but expired in 1784 owing to the disgust of reformers at the Fox-North Coalition—so Place asserts (B.M. Add. MSS., 27808).

[1] T. Walker, *op. cit.*, 18, 19.

petition of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and declared that the Presbyterians felt the grievance of being excluded from civic offices unless they perverted. On wider grounds also he appealed against this petty form of persecution, which might make men hypocrites but never sincere converts. Henry Dundas and his nephew, Robert Dundas (Lord Advocate for Scotland), opposed the motion, mainly because it would infringe the terms of the Act of Union; but Henry added the curious argument that, if Scottish Presbyterians were relieved from the Test Act, then the English Dissenters would have been "unjustly, harshly, and cruelly used." Pitt avowed himself "not a violent friend, but a firm and steady friend" of the Test Act, as being essential to the security of the Church and therefore of the civil establishment of the country. Accordingly, Elliot's motion was defeated by 149 votes to 62.[1] It is curious that, a month earlier, the House had agreed to a Bill granting slightly wider toleration to "Catholic Dissenters."[2]

While Pitt was thus strengthening the old buttresses of Church and State, the son of a Quaker had subjected the whole fabric to a battery of violent rhetoric. It is scarcely too much to call Thomas Paine the Rousseau of English democracy. For, if his arguments lacked the novelty of those of the Genevese thinker (and even they were far from original), they equalled them in effectiveness, and excelled them in practicability. "The Rights of Man" (Part I) may be termed an insular version of the "Contrat Social," with this difference, that the English writer pointed the way to changes which were far from visionary, while the Genevese seer outlined a polity fit only for a Swiss canton peopled by philosophers. Paine had had the advantage of close contact with men and affairs in both hemispheres. Not even Cobbett, his literary successor, passed through more varied experiences. Born in 1737 at Thetford in Norfolk, Paine divided his early life between stay-making, excise work, the vending of tobacco, and a seafaring life. His keen eyes, lofty brow, prominent nose, proclaimed him a thinker and fighter, and therefore, in that age, a rebel. What more natural than that he, a foe to authority and hater of oppression, should go to America to help on the cause of Washington? There at last he discovered his true vocation. His broadsides struck home. "Rebellious staymaker, unkempt," says Carlyle, "who feels that he, a single needleman, did by his 'Common Sense' pamphlet, free America; that he can, and will free all this world; perhaps even the other." Tom Paine, indeed, had the rare gift of voicing tersely and stridently the dumb desires of the masses Further, a sojourn in France before and during the early part of the Revolution enabled him to frame a crushing retort to Burke's "Reflections." The result was Part I of the "Rights of Man," which he flung off at the "Angel" in Islington in February 1791.[1]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 488-510.

[2] *Ibid.*, 113-9.

The general aims of the pamphlet are now as little open to question as the famous Declaration which he sought to vindicate. Paine trenchantly attacked Burke's claim that no people, not even our own, had an inherent right to choose its own ruler, and that the Revolution Settlement of 1688 was binding for ever. Paine, on the contrary, asserted that "every age and generation must be as free to act for itself *in all cases* as the ages and generations that preceded it. The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies." Further, on the general question at issue, Paine remarked: "That men should take up arms, and spend their lives and fortunes, *not* to maintain their rights, but to maintain they have *not* rights, is an entirely new species of discovery and suited to the paradoxical genius of Mr. Burke." In reply to the noble passage: "The age of chivalry is gone . . .," Paine shrewdly says: "In the rhapsody of his imagination he has discovered a world of windmills, and his sorrows are that there are no Quixotes to attack them."

After thus exposing the weak points of the royalist case, Paine proceeded to defend the mob, firstly, because the aristocratic plots against the French Revolution were really formidable (a very disputable thesis), and secondly, because the mob in all old countries is the outcome of their unfair and brutal system of government. "It is by distortedly exalting some men," he says, "that others are distortedly debased, till the whole is out of nature. A vast mass of mankind are degradedly thrown into the background of the human picture, to bring forward with greater glare the puppet show of State and aristocracy." Here was obviously the Junius of democracy, for whom the only effective answer was the gag and gyve. Indeed, Burke in his

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[1] M. D. Conway, "Life of T. Paine," i, 284.

"Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs" suggested that the proper refutation was by means of "criminal justice."[1]

Pitt's opinions at this time on French and English democracy tend towards a moderate and reforming royalism—witness his comment on Burke's "Reflections," that the writer would have done well to extol the English constitution rather than to attack the French.[2] In this remark we may detect his preference for construction over destruction, for the allaying, rather than the exciting, of passion. Nevertheless the one-sidedness of the English constitution made for unrest. So soon as one bold voice clearly contrasted those defects with the inspiring precepts of the French Rights of Man, there was an end to political apathy. A proof of this was furnished by the number of replies called forth by Burke's "Reflections." They numbered thirty-eight.[3] Apart from that of Paine, the "Vindiciae Gallicae" of Sir James Mackintosh made the most impression, especially the last chapter, wherein he declared that the conspiracy of the monarchs to crush the liberties of France would recoil on their own heads.

Fear of the alleged royalist league quickened the sympathy of Britons with the French reformers; while the sympathy of friends of order with Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette after the Varennes incident deepened their apprehension of all change. Thus were called into play all the feelings which most deeply move mankind—love of our richly storied past and its embodiment, the English constitution; while on the other hand no small part of our people harboured resentment against the narrow franchise and class legislation at home, and felt a growing fear that the nascent freedom of Frenchmen might expire under the heel of the military Powers of Central Europe. Accordingly clubs and societies grew apace, and many of them helped on the circulation of cheap editions of Paine's pamphlet.

The result of this clash of opinion was seen in the added keenness of party strife and in the disturbances of 14th July 1791. The occasion of these last was the celebration by a subscription dinner of the second anniversary of the fall of the

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[1] Burke's Works, iii, 76 (Bohn edit.).

[2] *Ibid.*, iii, 12. So, too, on 30th August 1791 Priestley wrote that Pitt had shown himself unfavourable to their cause (Rutt, "Life of Priestley," ii, 145).

[3] Prior, "Life of Burke," 322, who states very incorrectly that not one of them has survived.

Bastille. Both at Manchester and Birmingham the announcement of this insular and inoffensive function aroused strong feelings either of envy or of opposition. The Tories of Manchester resolved that, if the local Constitutional Club chose to dine on that day it should be at their peril. The populace was urged to pull down the hotel on their heads, "as the brains of every man who dined there would be much improved by being mingled with bricks and mortar." Thomas Walker's control of the local constables sufficed to thwart this pleasantry.

But on that day the forces of reaction broke loose at Birmingham. In the Midland capital political feeling ran as high as at Manchester. The best known of the reformers was Dr. Priestley, a Unitarian minister, whose researches in physical science had gained him a world-wide reputation and a fellowship in the Royal Society. He and many other reformers proposed to feast in public in honour of the French national festival. Unfortunately, the annoyance of the loyalists at this proposal was inflamed by a recent sermon of Priestley on the death of Dr. Price and by the circulation of a seditious handbill. Dr. Keir, a Churchman who was to preside at the dinner, did not prove to the satisfaction of all that this was a trick of the enemy. Public opinion was also excited by the discovery of the words "This barn to let" chalked on some of the churches of the town; and charges were bandied to and fro that this was the work of the Dissenters, or of the most virulent of their opponents.

What is certain is that these *hors d'œuvres* endangered the rest of the *menu*. The dinner-committee, however, struggled manfully with their difficulties. They had a Churchman in the chair, and Priestley was not present. The loyalty of the diners also received due scenic warrant in the work of a local artist. The dining-hall of the hotel was "decorated with three emblematical pieces of sculpture, mixed with painting in a new style of composition. The central was a finely executed medallion of His Majesty, surrounded with a Glory, on each side of which was an alabaster obelisk, one exhibiting Gallic Liberty breaking the bonds of Despotism, and the other representing British Liberty in its present enjoyment." The terms in which the fourteen toasts were proposed breathed of the same flamboyant loyalty, the only one open to criticism being the following: "The Prince of Wales! May he have the wisdom to prefer the glory of being the chief of an entire [*sic*] free people to that of being only the splendid fountain of corruption."[1]

The dinner passed with only occasional rounds of hissing from the loyalists outside. But, as the evening wore on and the speeches inside still continued, the crowd became restive. Stone-throwing began and was not discouraged by the two magistrates, the Rev. Dr. Spencer and John Carles, who had now arrived. In fact, the clergyman with an oath praised a lad who said that Priestley ought to be ducked; Carles also promised the rabble drink; and when a local humourist asked for permission to knock the dust out of Priestley's wig, the champions of order burst out laughing. A witness at the trial averred that he saw an attorney, John Brook, go among the mob and point towards Priestley's chapel. However that may be, the rabble moved off hither and speedily wrecked it. His residence at Fair Hill was next demolished, his library and scientific instruments being burnt or smashed. This was but the prelude to organized attacks on the houses of the leading Nonconformists, whether they had been at the dinner or not. The resulting riots soon involved in ruin a large part of the town. Prominent Churchmen who sought to end these disgraceful scenes suffered both in person and property. A word of remonstrance sufficed to turn into new channels the tide of hatred and greed; for, as happened in the Gordon riots of 1780, rascality speedily rushed in to seize the spoils.

The usually dull archives of the Home Office yield proof of the terror that reigned in the Midland capital. A Mr. Garbett wrote to Dundas on 17th July that the wrecking still went on, that the Nonconformists were in the utmost dread and misery, and all people looked for help from outside to stay the pillage. As for himself, though he was not a "marked man," his hand trembled at the scenes he had witnessed. There can be little doubt that the magistrates from the first acted with culpable weakness, as Whitbread proved in the House of Commons, for they did not enrol special constables until the rioters had got the upper hand. Dundas, as Home Secretary, seems to have done his duty. The news of the riot of the 14th reached him at 10 a.m. on the 15th (Friday); and he at once sent post haste to Nottingham, ordering the immediate despatch of the 15th Dragoons.

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 19.

By dint of a forced march of fifty-six miles the horsemen reached Birmingham on the evening of that same day (Sunday); but two days more elapsed before drunken blackmailers ceased to molest Hagley, Halesowen, and other villages. Few persons lost their lives, except about a dozen of the pillagers who lay helpless with drink in the cellars of houses which their more zealous comrades had given over to the flames.[1]

The verdict of Grenville was as follows: "I do not admire riots in favour of Government much more than riots against it." That of his less cautious brother, the Marquis of Buckingham, is as follows: "I am not sorry for this *excess*, *excessive as it has been*." That of Pitt is not recorded. He did not speak during the debate on this subject on 21st May 1792; but the rejection of Whitbread's motion for an inquiry by 189 votes to 46 implies unanimity on the Ministerial side.[2]

In the winter of 1791-2 various incidents occurred which further excited public opinion. On 17th February 1792 appeared the second part of Paine's "Rights of Man." He started from the assumption that the birth of a democratic State in America would herald the advent of Revolutions not only in France, but in all lands; and that British and Hessians would live to bless the day when they were defeated by the soldiers of Washington. He then proceeded to arraign all Governments of the old type, and asserted that constitutions ought to be the natural outcome of the collective activities of the whole people. There was nothing mysterious about Government, if Courts had not hidden away the patent fact that it dealt primarily with the making and administering of laws. We are apt to be impressed by these remarks until we contrast them with the majestic period wherein Burke depicts human society as a venerable and mysterious whole bequeathed by the wisdom of our forefathers. An admirer of Burke cannot but quote the passage in full: "Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein by the disposition of a stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenour of perpetual decay, fall, renovation and progression. Thus, by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the State, in what we improve we are never wholly new; in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete."[1]

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[1] *Ibid.* As late as 9th August a proclamation was posted about Birmingham: "The friends of the good cause are requested to meet us at Revolution Place to-morrow night at 11 o'clock in order to fix upon those persons who are to be the future objects of our malice." Of course this was but an incitation to plunder. See Massey, iii, 462-6, on the Birmingham riots.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 133, 136; "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 1464.

This is a majestic conception. But, after all, the practical question at issue is—how much of the old shall we retain and how much must be discarded? Unfortunately for himself and his cause, Burke was now urging his countrymen to support two military Powers in their effort to compel the French people to revert to institutions which were alike obsolete and detested. Is it surprising that Paine, utterly lacking all sense of reverence for the past, should brand this conduct as treasonable to the imperious needs of the present? Viewing monarchy as represented by Versailles or Carlton House, and aristocracy by the intrigues of Coblentz and the orgies of Brooks's Club, he gave short shrift to both forms of Government. Monarchy he pronounced more or less despotic; and under aristocracy (he says) the interests of the whole body necessarily suffer; democracy alone secures the rule of the general will; and this can be thoroughly secured only in a democratic republic. He then attacks the English constitution as unjust and extravagant, claiming that the formation of a close alliance between England, France, and America would enable the expenses of government (Army, Navy, and Civil List inclusive) to be reduced to a million and a half a year.

With regard to the means of raising revenue, Paine sketched a plan of progressive taxation on incomes, ranging from 3*d.* in the pound on incomes less than £500 to punitive proportions after £10,000 was reached; while in his Spartan arithmetic great wealth appeared so dire a misfortune that he rid the possessors of the whole of incomes of £23,000 and upwards. As for Pitt's financial reforms, he laughed them to scorn. He also accused him of throwing over the fair promises that marked his early career, of advertising for enemies abroad, while at home he toadied to the Court. "The defect lies in the system. . . .

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[1] Burke "Reflections on the Fr Rev.," 39 (Mr. Payne's edit.).

Prop it as you please, it continually sinks into Court government, and ever will." Finally he urged a limitation of armaments, and prophesied that wars would cease when nations had their freely elected Conventions. The cynic will remember with satisfaction that, two months later, began the war between France and Austria, which developed into the most tremendous series of wars recorded in history.

The republican and levelling doctrines frankly advocated in Paine's second pamphlet made a greater sensation than the first part had done; and Fox, who approved the former production, sternly reprobated the latter. It is possible that Government sought to stop its publication; for Chapman, the publisher, to whom Paine first applied, offered him £1,000 for the manuscript, and yet very soon afterwards declared it to be too dangerous for him to print.[1] Certainly the work soon quickened the tone of political thought. Already the London Society for promoting Constitutional Information, which had died of inanition in 1784, had come to life again before the close of the year 1791. And at the end of that year a determined man, Thomas Hardy, a poor shoemaker of Westminster, set to work to interest his comrades in politics. He assembled four men at an ale-house, and they agreed to take action. At their second meeting, on 25th January 1792, they mustered eight strong, and resolved to start "The London Corresponding Society for the Reform of Parliamentary Representation." Its finances were scarcely on a par with its title: they consisted of eightpence, the first weekly subscription. But the idea proved infectious; and amidst the heat engendered by Paine's second pamphlet, the number of members rose to forty-one.[2] The first manifesto of the Society, dated 2nd April, claimed political liberty as the birthright of man, declared the British nation to be misrepresented by its Parliament, and, while repudiating all disorderly methods, demanded a thorough reform of that body.

So far as I have been able to discover, this was the first political club started by English working-men at that time. But now the men of Sheffield also organized themselves. Their "Association" began in an assembly of five or six mechanics, who discussed "the enormous high price of provisions" and

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[1] Conway, *op. cit.*, ii, 330. The printer and publisher were prosecuted later on, as well as Paine, who fled to France.

[2] "Mem. of T. Hardy," by himself (Lond., 1832).

"the waste and lavish [*sic*] of the public property by placemen, pensioners, luxury and debauchery,—sources of the grievous burthens under which the nation groans." The practical character of their lamentations attracted many working men, with the result that they resolved to reprint and circulate 1,600 copies of Paine's "Rights of Man" (Part I), at sixpence a copy. On 15th January 1792 they wrote up to the "London Society for Constitutional Information" to plan co-operation with them.

At first the ideas of the Sheffield Association were somewhat parochial. But the need of common action all over the Kingdom was taking shape in several minds, and when Scotland awoke to political activity (as will appear in Chapter VII) the idea of a General Convention took firm root and led to remarkable developments. For the present, the chief work of these clubs was the circulation of Paine's volumes (even in Welsh, Gaelic, and Erse) at the price of sixpence or even less. They also distributed "The Catechism of the French Constitution" (of 1791), drawn up by Christie, a Scot domiciled at Paris, which set forth the beauties of that child of many hopes. Less objectionable was a pamphlet—"The Rights of Men and the Duties of Men." For the most part, however, their literature was acridly republican in tone and of a levelling tendency. Thus, for the first time since the brief attempt of the Cromwellian Levellers, the rich and the poor began to group themselves in hostile camps, at the strident tones of Paine's cry for a graduated Income Tax. Is it surprising that the sight of the free institutions of France and of the forced economy of the Court of the Tuileries should lead our workers to question the utility of the State-paid debaucheries of Carlton House, and of the whole system of patronage and pensions? Burke and Pitt had pruned away a few of the worst excrescences; but now they saw with dismay the whole of the body politic subjected to remorseless criticism by those whose duty was to toil and not to think or question.

This was a new departure in eighteenth-century England. Hitherto working men had taken only a fleeting and fitful interest in politics. How should they do so in days when newspapers were very dear, and their contents had only the remotest bearing on the life of the masses? The London mob had bawled and rioted for "Wilkes and Liberty," but mainly from personal motives and love of horse-play. Now, however, all was changed; and artisans were willing to sacrifice their time and their pence to learn and teach a political catechism, and spread the writings of Paine. Consequently the new Radical Clubs differed widely from the short-lived County Associations of 1780 which charged a substantial fee for membership. Moreover, these Associations expired in the years 1783-4, owing to the disgust at Fox's Coalition with Lord North. We are therefore justified in declaring that English democracy entered on a new lease of life, and did not, as has been asserted,[1] merely continue the movement of 1780. The earlier efforts had been wholly insular in character; they aimed at staying the tide of corruption; their methods were in the main academic, and certainly never affected the great mass of the people. Now reformers were moved by a wider enthusiasm for the rights of humanity, and sought not merely to abolish pocket boroughs and sinecures, but to level up the poor and level down the wealthy. It was this aspect of Paine's teaching that excited men to a frenzy of reprobation or of hope.

A certain continuity of tradition and method is observable in a club, called The Friends of the People, which was founded at Freemasons' Tavern in April 1792, with a subscription of five guineas a year. The members included Cartwright, Erskine, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Philip Francis, Charles Grey, Lambton, the Earl of Lauderdale, Mackintosh, Sheridan, Whitbread, and some sixty others; but Fox refused to join. Their profession of faith was more moderate than that of Hardy's Club; it emphasized the need of avoiding innovation and of restoring the constitution to its original purity.[2] This was in the spirit of the Associations of 1780; but the new club was far less characteristic of the times than the clubs of working men described above.

The appearance of Paine's "Rights of Man" (Part II), the founding of these societies, and the outbreak of war between France and Austria in April 1792 made a deep impression on Pitt. He opposed a notice of a motion of Reform for the following session, brought forward by Grey on 30th April. While affirming his continued interest in that subject, Pitt deprecated its introduction at that time as involving the risk of anarchy.

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[1] Leslie Stephen, "The Eng. Utilitarians," i, 121. I fully admit that the Chartist leaders in 1838 went back to the Westminster programme of 1780. See "The Life and Struggles of William Lovett"; but the spirit and methods of the new agitation were wholly different. On this topic I feel compelled to differ from Mr. J. L. le B. Hammond ("Fox," ch. v, *ad init.*). Mr. C. B. R. Kent ("The English Radicals," 156) states the case correctly.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 1303-9.

> My object [he continued] always has been, and is now more particularly so, to give permanence to that which we actually enjoy rather than remove subsisting grievances. . . . I once thought, and still think, upon the point of the representation of the Commons, that, if some mode could be adopted by which the people could have any additional security for a continuance of the blessings which they now enjoy, it would be an improvement in the constitution of this country. That was the extent of my object. Further I never wished to go; and if this can be obtained without the risk of losing what we have, I should think it wise to make the experiment. When I say this, it is not because I believe there is any existing grievance in this country that is felt at this hour.

At the end of the American War (he continued) when bankruptcy seemed imminent, he believed Reform to be necessary in order to restore public confidence and remedy certain notorious grievances. Even then very many moderate men opposed his efforts as involving danger to the State. How much more would they deprecate sweeping proposals which rightly aroused general apprehension? He then censured the action of certain members of the House in joining an Association (the "Friends of the People") which was supported by those who aimed at the overthrowing of hereditary monarchy, titles of nobility, and all ideas of subordination. He would oppose all proposals for Reform rather than run the risk of changes so sweeping.—"All, all may be lost by an indiscreet attempt upon the subject." Clearly, Pitt was about to join the ranks of the alarmists. But members generally were of his opinion. In vain did Fox, Erskine, Grey, and Sheridan deprecate the attempt to confuse moderate Reform with reckless innovation. Burke illogically but effectively dragged in the French spectre, and Windham declared that the public mind here, as in other lands, was in such a state that the slightest scratch might produce a mortal wound.

The gulf between Pitt and the reformers now became impassable. His speech of 10th May against any relaxation of the penal laws against Unitarians is a curious blend of bigotry and panic. Eleven days later a stringent proclamation was issued against all who wrote, printed, and dispersed "divers wicked and seditious writings." It ordered all magistrates to search out the authors and abettors of them, and to take steps for preventing disorder. It also inculcated "a due submission to the laws, and a just confidence in the integrity and wisdom of Parliament." Anything less calculated to beget such a confidence than this proclamation, threatening alike to reformers and levellers, can scarcely be conceived. On 25th May Grey opposed it in an acrid speech; he inveighed against Pitt as an apostate, who never kept his word, and always intended to delude Parliament and people. The sting of the speech lay, not in these reckless charges, but in the citing of Pitt's opinions as expressed in a resolution passed at the Thatched House Tavern in May 1782, which declared that without Parliamentary Reform neither the liberty of the nation nor the permanence of a virtuous administration was secure. Pitt's reply, however, convinced all those whose minds were open to conviction. He proved to demonstration that he had never approved of universal suffrage; yet that was now the goal aimed at by Paine and the Societies founded on the basis of the Rights of Man. The speech of Dundas also showed that the writings of Paine, and the founding of clubs with those ends in view, had led to the present action of the Cabinet.

Undoubtedly those clubs had behaved in a provocative manner. Apart from their correspondence with the Jacobins Club (which will be described later), they advocated aims which then seemed utterly subversive of order. Thus, early in May 1792, the Sheffield Society declared their object to be "a radical Reform of the country, as soon as prudence and discretion would permit, and established on that system which is consistent with the Rights of Man." Further, the hope is expressed that not only the neighbouring towns and villages, most of which were forming similar societies, but also the whole country would be "united in the same cause, which cannot fail of being the case wherever the most excellent works of Thomas Paine find reception."[1]

Now, this banding together of societies and clubs pointed the way to the forming of a National Convention which would truly represent the whole nation. In judging the action of Pitt and his colleagues at this crisis, we must remember that they had before them the alarming example of the Jacobins Club of

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[1] "Application of Barruel's 'Memoirs of Jacobinism' to the Secret Societies of Ireland and Great Britain," 32-3.

Paris, which had gained enormous power by its network of affiliated clubs. This body again was modelled on the various societies of the Illuminati in Germany, whose organizer, Weishaupt, summed up his contention in the words: "All their union shall be carried on by the correspondence and visits of the brethren. If we can gain but that point, we shall have succeeded in all we want."[1] This is why the name Corresponding Society stank in the nostrils of all rulers. It implied a parasitic organization which, if allowed to grow, would strangle the established Government. Signs were not wanting that this was the aim of the new Radical Clubs. Thus the delegates of the United Constitutional Societies who met at Norwich drew up on 24th March 1792 resolutions expressing satisfaction at the rapid growth of those bodies, already numbering some hundreds, "which by delegates preserve a mutual intercourse." . . . "To Mr. Thomas Paine our thanks are specially due for his first and second parts of the 'Rights of Man'; and we sincerely wish that he may live to see his labours crowned with success in the general diffusion of liberty and happiness among mankind." . . . "We . . . earnestly entreat our brethren to increase in their Associations in order to form one grand and extensive Union of all the friends of liberty."[2] It is not surprising that this plan of a National Convention of levellers produced something like a panic among the well-to-do; and it is futile to assert that men who avowed their belief in the subversive teaching of Part II of Paine's book were concerned merely with the Reform of Parliament. They put that object in their public manifestoes; but, like many of the Chartists of a later date, their ultimate aim was the redistribution of wealth; and this it was which brought on them the unflinching opposition of Pitt.

Nevertheless even these considerations do not justify him in opposing the reformers root and branch. The greatest statesman is he who distinguishes between the real grievances of a suffering people and the visionary or dangerous schemes which they beget in ill-balanced brains. To oppose moderate reformers as well as extremists is both unjust and unwise. It confounds together the would-be healers and the enemies of the existing order. Furthermore, an indiscriminate attack tends to close the ranks in a solid phalanx, and it should be the aim of a tactician first to seek to loosen those ranks.

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[1] "Application of Barruel's 'Memoirs of Jacobinism' to the Secret Societies of Ireland and Great Britain," Introduction, p. x.

[2] "H. O., Geo. III (Domestic), 20.

Finally, we cannot forget that Pitt had had it in his power to redress the most obvious of the grievances which kept large masses of his countrymen outside the pale of political rights and civic privilege. Those grievances were made known to him temperately in the years 1787, 1789, and 1790; but he refused to amend them, and gradually drifted to the side of the alarmists and reactionaries. Who is the wiser guide at such a time? He who sets to work betimes to cure certain ills which are producing irritation in the body politic? Or he who looks on the irritation as a sign that nothing should be done? The lessons of history and the experience of everyday life plead for timely cure and warn against a nervous postponement. Doubtless Pitt would have found it difficult to persuade some of his followers to apply the knife in the session of 1791 or 1792. But in the Parliament elected in 1790 his position was better assured, his temper more imperious, than in that of 1785, which needed much tactful management. The fact, then, must be faced that he declined to run the risk of the curative operation, even at a time when there were no serious symptoms in the patient and little or no risk for the surgeon.

The reason which he assigned for his refusal claims careful notice. It was that his earlier proposals (those of 1782-5) had aimed at national security; while those of the present would tend to insecurity. Possibly in the month of April 1792 this argument had some validity; though up to that time all the violence had been on the Tory side. But the plea does not excuse Pitt for not taking action in the year 1790. That was the period when the earlier apathy of the nation to Reform was giving way to interest, and interest had not yet grown into excitement. Still less had loyalty waned under the repressive measures whereby he now proposed to give it vigour.

Thus, Pitt missed a great opportunity, perhaps the greatest of his career. What it means is clear to us, who know that the cause of Reform passed under a cloud for the space of thirty-eight years. It is of course unfair to censure him and his friends for lacking a prophetic vision of the long woes that were to come. Most of the blame lavished upon him arises from forgetfulness of the fact that he was not a seer mounted on some political Pisgah, but a pioneer struggling through an unexplored jungle. Nevertheless, as the duty of a pioneer is not merely to hew a path, but also to note the lie of the land and the signs of the weather, we must admit that Pitt did not possess the highest instincts of his craft. He cannot be ranked with Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Alfred the Great, Edward I, or Burleigh, still less with those giants of his own age, Napoleon and Stein; for these men boldly grappled with the elements of unrest or disloyalty, and by wise legislation wrought them into the fabric of the State. Probably the lack of response to his reforming efforts in the year 1785 ingrained in him the conviction that Britons would always be loyal if their burdens were lessened and their comforts increased; and now in 1792 he looked on the remissions of taxation (described in the following chapter) as a panacea against discontent. Under normal conditions that would have been the case. It was not so now, because new ideas were in the air, and these forbade a bovine acceptance of abundant fodder. In truth, Pitt had not that gift without which the highest abilities and the most strenuous endeavours will at novel crises be at fault—a sympathetic insight into the needs and aspirations of the people. His analytical powers enabled him to detect the follies of the royalist crusaders; but he lacked those higher powers of synthesis which alone could discern the nascent strength of Democracy.

CHAPTER II

BEFORE THE STORM

I find it to be a very general notion, at least in the Assembly, that if France can preserve a neutrality with England, she will be able to cope with all the rest of Europe united.—GOWER TO GRENVILLE, 22*nd April* 1792.

INDIRECT evidence as to the intentions of a statesman is often more convincing than his official assertions. The world always suspects the latter; and many politicians have found it expedient to adopt the ironical device practised frequently with success by Bismarck on his Austrian colleagues at Frankfurt, that of telling the truth. Fortunately the English party game has nearly always been kept up with sportsmanlike fair play; and Pitt himself was so scrupulously truthful that we are rarely in doubt as to his opinions, save when he veiled them by ministerial reserve. Nevertheless, on the all-important subject of his attitude towards Revolutionary France, it is satisfactory to have indirect proofs of his desire to maintain a strict, if not friendly, neutrality. This proof lies in his handling of the nation's armaments and finances.

The debate on the Army Estimates on 15th February 1792 is of interest in more respects than one. The news of the definitive signature of peace between Russia and Turkey by the Treaty of Jassy, put an end to the last fears of a resumption of war in the East; and, as the prospects were equally pacific in the West, the Ministry carried out slight reductions in the land forces. These were fixed in the year 1785 at seventy-three regiments of 410 men each, divided into eight companies, with two companies *en second*. In 1789 the number of companies per regiment was fixed at ten, without any companies *en second*. Now the Secretary at War, Sir Charles Yonge, proposed further reductions, which, with those of 1789, would lessen each regiment by seventy privates, and save the country the sum of £51,000. No diminution was proposed in the number of officers;

and this gave Fox a handle for an attack. He said that the natural plan would be to reduce the number of regiments to sixty-four. Instead of that, the number of seventy regiments was retained, and new corps were now proposed for the East Indies, one for the West Indies, and one for Canada, chiefly to be used for pioneer work and clearance of woods. General Burgoyne and Fox protested against the keeping up of skeleton regiments, the latter adding the caustic comment that the plan was "the least in point of saving and the greatest in point of patronage."[1]

The practices prevalent in that age give colour to the charge. On the other hand, professional men have defended a system which kept up the *cadres* of regiments in time of peace, as providing a body of trained officers and privates, which in time of war could be filled out by recruits. Of course it is far inferior to the plan of a reserve of trained men; but that plan had not yet been hammered out by Scharnhorst, under the stress of the Napoleonic domination in Prussia. As to the reduction of seven men per company, now proposed, it may have been due partly to political reasons. Several reports in the Home Office and War Office archives prove that discontent was rife among the troops, especially in the northern districts, on account of insufficient pay and the progress of Radical propaganda among them. The reduction may have afforded the means of sifting out the ringleaders.

Retrenchment, if not Reform, was the order of the day. Pitt discerned the important fact that a recovery in the finance and trade of the country must be encouraged through a series of years to produce a marked effect. For then the application of capital to industry, and the increase in production and revenue can proceed at the rate of compound interest. Already his hopes, for which he was indebted to the "Wealth of Nations,"[2] had been largely realized. The Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons presented in May 1791 showed the following growth in the ordinary revenue (exclusive of the Land and Malt Taxes):

1786	£11,867,055
1787	12,923,134
1788	13,007,642
1789	13,433,068
1790	14,072,978

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 810-15

[2] *Ibid.*, 834.

During those five years the sum of £4,750,000 had been allotted to the Sinking Fund for the payment of the National Debt; and a further sum of £674,592, accruing from the interest of stock and expired annuities, had gone towards the same object—a crushing retort to the taunts of Fox and Sheridan, that the Sinking Fund was a mere pretence. On the whole the sum of £5,424,592 had been paid off from the National Debt in five years. It is therefore not surprising that three per cent. Consols, which were down at fifty-four when Pitt took office at the end of 1783, touched ninety in the year 1791. The hopes and fears of the year 1792 find expression in the fact that in March they stood at ninety-seven, and in December dropped to seventy-four.

For the present Pitt entertained the highest hopes. In his Budget Speech of 17th February he declared the revenue to be in so flourishing a state that he could grant relief to the tax-payers. In the year 1791 the permanent taxes had yielded £14,132,000; and those on land and malt brought the total up to £16,690,000; but he proposed to take £16,212,000 as the probable revenue for the following year. The expenditure would be lessened by £104,000 on the navy (2,000 seamen being discharged), and about £50,000 on the army; £36,000 would also be saved by the non-renewal of the subsidy for Hessian troops. There were, however, additions, due to the establishment of the Government of Upper Canada, and the portions allotted to the Duke of York (on the occasion of his marriage with a Prussian princess) and the Duke of Clarence. The expenditure would, therefore, stand at £15,811,000; but, taking the average of four years, he reckoned the probable surplus at no more than £401,000. On the other hand, he anticipated no new expenses except for the fortification of posts in the West Indies and the completion of forts for the further protection of the home dockyards. On the whole, then, he reckoned that he had £600,000 to spare; and of this amount he proposed to allocate £400,000 to the reduction of the National Debt and the repeal of the extra duty on malt, an impost much disliked by farmers. He also announced a remission of permanent taxes to the extent of £200,000, namely, on female servants, carts, and waggons, and that of three shillings on each house having less than seven windows. These were burdens that had undoubtedly affected the poor. Further, he hoped to add the sum of £200,000 every year to the Sinking Fund, and he pointed out that, at this rate of payment, that fund would amount to £4,000,000 per annum in the space of fifteen years, after which time the interest might be applied to the relief of the nation's burdens.

Then, rising high above the level of facts and figures, he ventured on this remarkable prophecy:

> I am not, indeed, presumptuous enough to suppose that, when I name fifteen years, I am not naming a period in which events may arise which human foresight cannot reach, and which may baffle all our conjectures. We must not count with certainty on a continuance of our present prosperity during such an interval; but unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country, when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than at the present moment.

Imagination pictures what might possibly have been the outcome of events if Great Britain and France had continued to exert on one another the peaceful and mutually beneficent influence which Pitt had sought to bring about. In that case, we can imagine the reformed French monarchy, or a Republic of the type longed for by Mme. Roland, permeating the thought and action of neighbouring States, until the cause of Parliamentary Reform in England, and the cognate efforts for civic and religious liberty on the Continent achieved a lasting triumph. That Pitt cherished these hopes is seen not only in his eloquent words, but in the efforts which he put forth to open up the world to commerce. The year 1792 ought to be remembered, not only for the outbreak of war and the horrors of the September massacres at Paris, but also for the attempt to inaugurate friendly relations with China. Pitt set great store by the embassy which he at this time sent out to Pekin under the lead of Lord Macartney. In happier times this enterprise might have served to link East and West in friendly intercourse; and Europe, weary of barren strifes, would have known no other rivalries than those of peace.

Alas: this is but a mirage. As it fades away, we discern an arid waste. War broke out between France and Austria within two months of this sanguine utterance. It soon embroiled France and England in mortal strife. All hope of retrenchment and Reform was crushed. The National Debt rose by leaps and bounds, and the Sinking Fund proved to be a snare. Taxation became an ever-grinding evil, until the poor, whose lot Pitt hoped to lighten, looked on him as the harshest of taskmasters, the puppet of kings, and the paymaster of the Continental Coalition. The spring of the year 1807 found England burdened beyond endurance, the Third Coalition stricken to death by the blows of Napoleon, while Pitt had fourteen months previously succumbed to heart-breaking toils and woes.

Before adverting to the complications with France which were thenceforth to absorb his energies, I must refer to some incidents of the session and summer of the year 1792.

One of the most noteworthy enactments was Fox's Libel Bill. In May 1791 that statesman had proposed to the House of Commons to subject cases of libel to the award of juries, not of judges. Pitt warmly approved the measure, maintaining that, far from protecting libellers, it would have the contrary effect. The Bill passed the Commons on 31st May; but owing to dilatory and factious procedure in the Lords, it was held over until the year 1792. Thanks to the noble plea for liberty urged by the venerable Earl Camden, it passed on 21st May.[1] It is matter of congratulation that Great Britain gained this new safeguard for freedom of speech before she encountered the storms of the revolutionary era.

There is little else to chronicle except two occurrences which displayed the power and the foresight of Pitt. They were the fall of Thurlow and the endeavour of the Prime Minister to form a working alliance with the Old Whigs. The former of these events greatly impressed the contemporaries of Pitt, who likened the ejected Chancellor to Lucifer or to a Titan blasted by Jove's thunderbolt. In this age we find it difficult to account for the prestige of Thurlow. His legal learning was far from profound, his speeches were more ponderous than powerful, and his attacks were bludgeon blows rather than home thrusts. Of the lighter graces and social gifts he had scant store. Indeed, his private life displayed no redeeming feature. Everyone disliked him, but very many feared him, mainly, perhaps, because of his facility for intrigue, his power of bullying, and his great influence at Court. As we have seen, the conciliatory efforts of the monarch had hitherto averted a rupture between Pitt and Thurlow. But not even the favour of George III could render the crabbed old Chancellor endurable. His spitefulness had increased since Pitt's nomination of Pepper Arden to the Mastership of the Rolls; and he showed his spleen by obstructing Government measures in the House of Lords. In April 1792 he flouted Pitt's efforts on behalf of the abolition of the Slave Trade; and on 15th May he ridiculed his proposal that to every new State loan a Sinking Fund should necessarily be appended. The Commons had passed this measure; but in the Lords Thurlow spoke contemptuously of the proposal; and his influence, if not his arguments, brought the Government majority down to six.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 551-602, 1404-31.

Pitt was furious. Despite a letter from Windsor urging the need of forbearance in the interests of the public service, he resolved to end this intolerable situation. Respectfully but firmly he begged the King to decide between him and Thurlow. The result was a foregone conclusion. Having to choose between an overbearing Chancellor, and a Prime Minister whose tact, firmness, and transcendent abilities formed the keystone of the political fabric, the King instructed Dundas to request Thurlow to deliver up the Great Seal.[1] For the convenience of public business, his resignation was deferred to the end of the session, which came at the middle of June. The Great Seal was then placed in commission until January 1793 when Lord Loughborough, formerly a follower of the Prince of Wales and Fox, became Lord Chancellor.

The dismissal of Thurlow is interesting on general as well as constitutional grounds. It marks an important step in the evolution of the Cabinet. Thenceforth the will of the Prime Minister was held to be paramount whenever any one of his colleagues openly and sharply differed from him. Thus the authority of the Prime Minister became more clearly defined. Not even the favour of the Sovereign could thenceforth uphold a Minister who openly opposed and scorned the head of the Cabinet. The recognition of this fact has undoubtedly conduced to the amenity of parliamentary life; for etiquette has imposed on Ministers the observance of outward signs of deference to their chief, and (save a few times in the breezy careers of Canning and Palmerston) dissensions have been confined to the council chamber.

As to Thurlow's feelings, they appear in his frank admission to Sir John Scott, the future Chancellor, Lord Eldon: "I did not think that the King would have parted with me so easily. As to that other man [Pitt], he has done to me just what I should have done to him if I could."[1] It is not often that a plotter shows his hand so clearly; and we must admire Pitt's discernment no less than his firmness at this crisis. Would that he had found a more faithful successor. Possibly some suspicion as to Loughborough's powers of intrigue led Pitt to make cautious advances to that promising lawyer, Sir John Scott. To his honour, be it said, Scott at once declared that he must cease to be Solicitor-General, as he had received much assistance from Thurlow. In vain did Pitt expostulate with him. At last he persuaded him to consult Thurlow, who advised him to do nothing so foolish, seeing that Pitt would be compelled at some future time to confer the Great Seal upon him. With this parting gleam of insight and kindliness, the morose figure of Thurlow vanishes.

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[1] Stanhope, ii, 148-50, and App., xv.

More than once in the session of 1792 rumours were afloat as to a reconstruction of the Cabinet. Early in that year, when the debates on the Russian armament somewhat shook Pitt's position, it was stated that the King desired to get rid of him. Gillray heard of the story, and visualized it with his usual skill. He represented the Marquis of Lansdowne ("Malagrida") as driving at full speed to St. James's Palace, heralded by the dove of peace, while Fox, Sheridan, etc., hang on behind and cry out, "Stop; stop; take us in." Pitt and Dundas are seen leaving the palace. The rumour gains in credibility from a Memorandum of the Marquis; but it is doubtful whether George ever thought seriously of giving up Pitt, still less of seeking support from the discredited and unpopular Lansdowne, whose views on the French Revolution were utterly opposed to those of the King. Probably the King put questions to him merely with the view of gratifying his own curiosity and exciting unreal hopes. Certainly Pitt scoffed at the idea of resignation. On 3rd March he referred to the rumour, in a letter to the Earl of Westmorland, merely to dismiss it as ridiculous.[2]

Far more important were the negotiations that began in May—June 1792. Pitt paved the way for a union with the Old Whigs by consulting the opinions of the Duke of Portland and other leading Whigs, assembled at Burlington House, respecting the proclamation against seditious writings. They suggested a few alterations in his draft and he adopted them. Fox alone declared against the whole scheme, and afterwards hotly opposed it in the House of Commons. This step having shown the cleavage in the Whig party, Dundas and Loughborough sought to effect a union of the Portland Whigs with the Government. The Duke of Portland strongly approved of it. Even Fox welcomed the proposal, but only on the understanding that the Whigs joined the Ministry on fair and even terms, sharing equally in the patronage. The Duke further suggested that Pitt should give up the Treasury and allow a neutral man like the Duke of Leeds to take that office. We can picture the upward tilt of the nose with which Pitt received this proposal.

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[1] Twiss, "Life of Lord Eldon," ch. x.

[2] Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne," iii, 500-4; Salomon, "Pitt,' 596. The King later on teased the Duke of Leeds by a more compromising overture.

Lord Malmesbury, who was present at this discussion of the Whig leaders on 13th June, himself saw great difficulties in such a plan, as also from the opposition of the King and the Prince of Wales. On the next day Loughborough met Pitt at Dundas's house, and reported him to be favourable to the idea of a coalition. Pitt further said that the King and the Queen would welcome it, except in so far as it concerned Fox, whose conduct in Parliament during the last few months had given great offence. Pitt further declared that he did not remember a single word in all the disputes with Fox which could prevent him honourably and consistently acting with him. He added that it might be difficult to give him the Foreign Office at once, but he could certainly have it in a few months' time. On 16th June Malmesbury saw Fox at Burlington House, and found him in an unusually acrid and suspicious mood, from the notion that the whole affair was a plot of Pitt to break up the Whig party. Beside which, Fox said that it was idle to expect Pitt to admit the Whig leaders on an equal footing. Malmesbury, however, maintained that, if Fox and the Duke were agreed, they would lead the whole of their party with them, at which remark Fox became silent and embarrassed.

Pitt, on the other hand, was very open to Loughborough, and expressed a wish to form a strong and united Ministry which could face the difficulties of the time. The chief obstacle to a coalition, he said, was Fox's support of French principles, which must preclude his taking the Foreign Office immediately. The remark is noteworthy as implying Pitt's expectation that either Fox might tone down his opinions, or the Revolution might abate its violence. Further, when Loughborough reminded him of the ardour of his advocacy of the Abolitionist cause, he replied that some concession must be made on that head, as the King strongly objected to the way in which it was pushed on by addresses and petitions, a method which he himself disliked. Further, he freely admitted that the "national Aristocracy" of the country must have its due weight and power.[1] These confessions (assuming that Loughborough reported them correctly) prepare us for the half right turn which now becomes the trend of Pitt's political career. In order to further the formation of a truly national party, he was willing, if necessary, to postpone the cause of the slaves and of Parliamentary Reform until the advent of calmer times.

At this stage of the discussions, then, Pitt was willing to meet the Whigs half way. But the chief difficulty lay, not with Fox and his friends, but with the King. When Pitt mentioned the proposal to him, there came the characteristic reply: "Anything complimentary to them, but no power."[2] How was it possible to harmonize this resolve with that of Fox, that the Whigs must have an equality of power? Grenville was a further obstacle. How could that stiff and ambitious man give up the Foreign Office to Fox, whose principles he detested? We hear little of Grenville in these days, probably because of his marriage to Lady Ann Pitt, daughter of Lord Camelford. But certainly he would not have tolerated a half Whig Cabinet.

It is therefore strange that the proposals were ever renewed. Renewed, however, they were, in the second week of July. Loughborough having spread the impression that Pitt desired their renewal, Leeds was again pushed to the front, it being suggested that he might be First Lord of the Treasury. Finally, on 14th August, the King granted him a private interview at Windsor, but stated that nothing had been said on the subject for a long time, and that it had never been seriously considered, it being impossible for Pitt to give up the Treasury and act as *Commis* to the Whig leaders. This statement should have lessened the Duke's astonishment at hearing from Pitt on 22nd August that there had been no thought of any change in the Government.[3] This assertion seems to belie Pitt's reputation for truthfulness. But it is noteworthy that Grenville scarcely refers to the discussions on this subject, deeply though it concerned him. Further, Rose, who was in close touch with Ministers, wrote to Auckland on 13th July that he had heard only through the newspapers of the "negotiations for a sort of Coalition," and that he knew there had been none; that Dundas had conferred with Loughborough, but there had been no negotiation.[1]

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 454-64.

[2] "Leeds Mem.," 188.

[3] *Ibid.*, 194.

Now the proneness of these two men to scheming and intrigue is well known; and it seems probable that they so skilfully pulled the wires at Burlington House as to quicken the appetites of the Whig leaders. Dundas may have acted with a view to breaking up the Whig party, and Loughborough in order to bring about a general shuffle of the cards favourable to himself. Malmesbury and others, whose desires or interests lay in a union of the Portland Whigs with Pitt, furthered the scheme, and gave full credence to Loughborough's reports. But we may doubt whether Pitt took the affair seriously after the crushing declaration of the King: "Anything complimentary to them, but no power." The last blow to the scheme was dealt by Pitt in an interview with Loughborough, so we may infer from the following letter from George III to the former:

> Weymouth, *August* 20, 1792.[2]
>
> I cannot but think Mr. Pitt has judged right in seeing Lord Loughborough, as that will convince him, however [whoever?] were parties to the proposal brought by the Duke of Leeds, that the scheme can never succeed: that the Duke of Portland was equally concerned with the former appeared clearly from his letters. . . .

The King, then, looked on the whole affair as a Whig plot; and Pitt, whatever his feelings were at first, finally frowned upon the proposal. Doubtless, in an official sense, there was justification for his remark to the Duke of Leeds, that the coalition had never been in contemplation; for the matter seems never to have come before the Cabinet. But as a statement between man and man it leaves something to be desired on the score of accuracy. Annoyance at the very exalted position marked out for the Duke, whose capacity Pitt rated decidedly low, may have led him to belittle the whole affair; for signs of constraint and annoyance are obvious in his other answers to his late colleague. There, then, we must leave this question, involved in something of mystery.[1] We shall not be far wrong in concluding that Pitt wished for the formation of a national Ministry, and that the plan failed, partly from the resolve of Fox never to play second to Pitt; and still more from the personal way in which the King regarded the suggestion.

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[1] "Auckland Journals," ii, 417, 418.

[2] Pitt MSS., 103.

The King meanwhile had marked his sense of the value of Pitt's services by pressing on him the honourable position of Warden of the Cinque Ports, with a stipend of £3,000 a year, intimating at the same time that he would not hear of his declining it (6th August).[2] It is a proof of the spotless purity of Pitt's reputation that not a single libel or gibe appeared in the Press on his acceptance of this almost honorary post.[3]

One brilliant recruit to the Whig ranks was now won over to the national cause, of which Pitt was seen to be the incarnation. Already at Eton and Oxford George Canning had shown the versatility of his genius and the precocious maturity of his eloquence. When his Oxford friend, Jenkinson (the future Earl of Liverpool) made a sensational *début* in the House on the Tory side, Sheridan remarked that the Whigs would soon provide an antidote in the person of young Canning. Great, then, was their annoyance when the prodigy showed signs of breaking away from the society of the Crewes and Sheridan, in order to ally himself with Pitt. So little is known respecting the youth of Canning that the motives which prompted his breach with Sheridan are involved in uncertainty. It is clear, however, from his own confession that, after some discussion with Orde, he himself made the first offer of allegiance to Pitt in a letter of 26th July 1792. He then informed the Prime Minister that, though on terms of friendship with eminent members of the Opposition, he was "in no way bound to them by any personal or political obligation," and was therefore entirely free to choose his own party; that he was ambitious of being connected with Pitt, but lacked the means to win an election, and yet refused to be brought in by any individual—a reference, seemingly, to an offer made to him by the Duke of Portland. In reply, Pitt proposed an interview at Downing Street on Wednesday, 15th August.[4]

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[1] I accept, with some qualification, Mr. Oscar Browning's explanation, that Lord Loughborough had exaggerated the accounts of his interviews with Pitt and the Whig leaders (see "Leeds Mem.," 197, note).

[2] Stanhope, ii, 160.

[3] "Bland Burges P.," 208.

[4] Stanhope, "Miscellanies," ii, 57-63. Letter of Canning to W. Stu[illegible]

At noon on that day the two men first met. We can picture them as they faced one another in the formal surroundings of the Prime Minister's study. Pitt, at this time thirty-three years of age, had lost some of the slimness of youth, but his figure was bony, angular, and somewhat awkward. His face was as yet scarcely marked by the slight Bacchic blotches which told of carouses with Dundas at Wimbledon. Months and years of triumph (apart from the Russian defeat) had stiffened his confidence and pride; but the fateful shadow of the French Revolution must have struck a chill to his being, especially then, on the arrival of news of the pitiable surrender of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and the shooting down of the Swiss Guards at the Tuileries. No royalist could look on the future without inward shuddering; and both these men were ardent royalists. We know from Canning's confession that it was the starting of the club, the Friends of the People, in April 1792, which disgusted him with the forward section of the Whigs; and their subsequent action completed the breach. Pitt's endeavour to form a national Administration must have gained a new significance from the terrible news from Paris. We may be sure, then, that the youth of twenty-two years gazed with eager interest on the stately form before him as at the embodiment of political wisdom, purity, and patriotism.

They shook hands. Then for a time they ambled coyly around the subject at issue, and talked of "France and Jenkinson, and other equally important concerns." Indeed Pitt seems to have been as nervous and awkward as the novice. At length he plunged into business. "It is your wish, I believe, Mr. Canning (and I am sure it is mine), to come in, etc." On Canning bowing assent, Pitt remarked that it was not easy to find an inexpensive seat, and commented on his expressed desire not to tie himself to any borough-owner. Whereupon the young aspirant, with more pride than tact, threw in the remark that he would not like to be personally beholden to such an one, for instance, as Lord Lonsdale (who first brought Pitt into Parliament). The

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Bourne, 3rd September 1792. This interview is not referred to by Mr. H. W. V. Temperley ("Canning," ch. ii), Mr. Sichel ("Sheridan"), Captain Bagot ("Canning and his Friends"), or E. Festing ("Frere and his Friends"). In "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters" I shall publish new letters of Canning. One, dated 15th March 1793, declines an offer of Portland to bring him into Parliament.

Prime Minister seemed not to notice the *gaucherie*, and stated that the Treasury had only six seats at its disposal, but could arrange matters with "proprietors of burgage-tenures." Thereupon Canning broke in more deftly. In that case, he said, it must be made clear that he bound himself to follow, not the borough-owner, but the Prime Minister. Here he more than recovered lost ground, if indeed he had lost any. Pitt expressed his sense of the compliment, and said that this could be managed, unless the young member came to differ absolutely from his patron. Canning then frankly confessed his inability to follow Pitt in maintaining the Test Act. Equally frank and cordial was the reply, that he (Pitt) did not claim exact agreement, especially on "speculative subjects," but only "a general good disposition towards Government," which might be strengthened by frequent contact.

Such was the course of this memorable interview. It sealed for ever the allegiance of the youth to his self-chosen leader. He had prepared Sheridan, and through him Fox and Bouverie, for this change of front. The openness, the charm, the self-effacing patriotism of the Minister thenceforth drew him as by an irresistible magnet. The brilliance and joviality of Fox and Sheridan counted as nothing against the national impulse which the master now set in motion and the pupil was destined to carry to further lengths. There was a natural sympathy between these men both in aim and temperament. It is a sign of the greatness of Pitt that from the outset he laid the spell of his genius irrevocably upon Canning.

Deferring to the next chapter a study of the democratic movement in Great Britain, we now turn our attention to the relations of Pitt to France, a topic which thenceforth dominates his life story and the destinies of mankind.

In the month of January 1792, there arrived in London an envoy charged with important proposals from the French Government. It was Talleyrand, ex-bishop of Autun. Pitt had become acquainted with him during his residence at Rheims in the summer of 1783; but the circumstances of the case now forbade anything more than passing intercourse with that most charming of talkers and subtlest of diplomatists. Talleyrand, having been a member of the first, or Constituent, Assembly, was prevented by the constitution of September 1791 from holding any office for two years after that date. Therefore his visit to London was ostensibly on private affairs. The Duc de Biron was the envoy, and Talleyrand merely his adviser. He was instructed to seek "to maintain and strengthen the good understanding which exists between the two Kingdoms."[1]

This was only the official pretext for the mission, the secret aim of which was to win the friendship, if not the alliance, of England in case of a Franco-Austrian war. In the early days of January 1792 the constitutional Ministry, holding office, though not power, at Paris, seemed to be working for a rupture with the Hapsburgs, partly in order to please the Jacobins, and partly to escape the ever increasing difficulties of its position. The earlier causes of dispute do not concern us here. As we have seen, the Emperor Leopold was far from desirous of war; but the provocative attitude of the Legislative Assembly at Paris and the humiliations of his sister, Marie Antoinette, aroused his resentment; and, early in January, he was heard to say "that if the French madmen were determined to force him into a war, they should find that the pacific Leopold knew how to wage it with the greatest vigour, and would oblige them to pay its expenses in something more solid than assignats." Our ambassador, Sir Robert Keith, was, however, convinced that this outburst and the westward march of troops were but "empty parade."[2]

On the other hand Earl Gower, British ambassador at Paris, reported that the Ministry, the Assembly, and the Jacobins Club (with the exception of Robespierre and his clique) desired war.[3] In truth, there seemed little risk in a struggle with the exhausted Hapsburg States, provided that they had support neither from Prussia nor from England. De Ségur therefore set out for Berlin, and Talleyrand for London, to secure the friendly neutrality or support of those Governments. The latter envoy was specially suited for his mission, as he carried on the traditions of Mirabeau, who in the closing months of his life urged the need of an Anglo-French *entente*.[4]

Talleyrand and Biron reached London on 24th January 1792. Before reaching the capital they read in the English papers that they had arrived there, and had been very coldly received by Pitt—a specimen of the arts by which the French *émigrés* in

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[1] Pallain, "La Mission de Talleyrand à Londres," 41.

[2] Keith's "Mems.," ii, 494. Keith to Grenville, 14th January 1792.

[3] "Gower's Despatches," 142, 143, 145, 149.

[4] Pallain, pp. xv-xviii.

London sought to embitter the relations between the two lands. Talleyrand had the good fortune to occupy a seat in the Strangers' Gallery at the opening of Parliament close to two ardent royalists, Cazalès and Lally-Tollendal. What must have been their feelings on hearing in the King's speech the statement of his friendly relations to the other Powers and his resolve to reduce the army and navy?

Already Pitt had seen Talleyrand. He reminded him in a friendly way of their meeting at Rheims, remarked on the unofficial character of the ex-bishop's "mission," but expressed his willingness to discuss French affairs, about which he even showed "curiosity." Grenville afterwards spoke to the envoy in the same courteous but non-committal manner. Talleyrand was however, charmed. He wrote to Delessart, the Foreign Minister at Paris: "Your best ground is England; . . . Believe me the rumours current in France about the disposition of England towards us are false."[1] He urged the need of showing a bold front; for "it is with a fleet that you must speak to England."

Talleyrand throughout showed the sagacity which earned him fame in diplomacy. He was not depressed by the King's frigid reception of him at St. James's on 1st February, or by the Queen refusing even to notice him. Even the escapades of Biron did not dash his hopes. That envoy ran up debts and bargained about horses *avec un nommé Tattersall, qui tient dans sa main tous les chevaux d'Angleterre*, until he was arrested for debt and immured in a "sponging house," whence the appeals of the ex-bishop failed to rescue him. As Biron had come with an official order to buy horses with a view to the impending war with Austria, we may infer that his arrest was the work of some keen-witted *émigré*.

Even this, however, was better than the fortunes of Ségur who found himself openly flouted both by King and courtiers at Berlin. For Frederick William was still bent on a vigorous policy. On 7th February his Ministers signed with Prince Reuss, the Austrian envoy, a secret treaty of defensive alliance, mainly for the settlement of French affairs, but also with a side glance at Poland. The Prussian Ministers probably hoped for a peaceful but profitable settlement, which would leave them free for a decisive intervention in the Polish troubles now coming to a crisis; but Frederick William was in a more warlike mood, and longed to overthrow the "rebels" in France. Ségur's mission to Berlin was therefore an utter failure. That of Talleyrand, on the other hand, achieved its purpose, mainly because Pitt and Grenville never had any other desire than to remain strictly neutral. It was therefore superfluous for Talleyrand to hint delicately at the desirability of the friendship of France for England, in view of the war with Tippoo Sahib in India, and the increasing ferment in Ireland.[1]

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[1] Pallain, 56, 57.

On 1st March Grenville again assured him of the earnest desire of the British Government to see the end of the troubles in France, and declared that Pitt and he had been deeply wounded by the oft-repeated insinuations that they had sought to foment them. All such charges were absurd; for "a commercial people stands only to gain by the freedom of all those who surround it." We may reasonably conclude that these were the words of Pitt; for they recall that noble passage of the "Wealth of Nations": "A nation that would enrich itself by trade is certainly most likely to do so when its neighbours are all rich, industrious, and commercial nations."[2] For the rest, Grenville defied the calumniators of England to adduce a single proof in support of their slanders, and requested Talleyrand to remain some time in England for the purpose of observing public opinion. He warned him, however, that the Cabinet could not give an answer to his main proposal.

More than this Talleyrand could scarcely expect. He had already divined the important secret that the Cabinet was divided on this subject, the King, Thurlow, and Camden being hostile to France, while Pitt, Grenville, and Dundas were friendly. When Talleyrand ventured to ascribe those sentiments to Pitt and Grenville, the latter did not deny it, and he at once echoed the desire expressed by the envoy for the conclusion of an Anglo-French alliance. That the greater part of the British people would have welcomed such a compact admits of no doubt. On the walls were often chalked the words: "No war with the French." Talleyrand advised the Foreign Minister, Delessart, to send immediately to London a fully accredited ambassador; for the talk often was: "We have an ambassador at Paris. Why have not you one here?" Nevertheless, a despatch of Grenville to Gower, on 9th March, shows that Pitt and he keenly felt the need of caution. They therefore enjoined complete silence on Gower. In truth, Grenville's expressions, quoted above, were merely the outcome of the good will which he and Pitt felt towards France. But these words from the two powerful Ministers meant safety for France on her coasts, whatever might betide her on the Meuse and the Rhine.

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[1] Pallain, 106, 107.

[2] "Wealth of Nations," bk. iv, ch. iii.

On the day when Grenville spoke these words of peace, two events occurred which portended war. Leopold II died; and an irritating despatch, which he and Kaunitz had recently sent to Paris, was read out to the Legislative Assembly. Thereafter a rupture was inevitable. Francis II, who now ascended the throne of his father, was a shy, proud, delicate youth of twenty-four years, having only a superficial knowledge of public affairs, scarcely known to the Ministers, and endowed with a narrow pedantic nature which was to be the bane of his people. He lacked alike the sagacity, the foresight, and the suppleness of Leopold. Further, though his inexperience should have inspired him with a dread of war for his storm-tossed States, yet that same misfortune subjected him to the advice of the veteran Chancellor, Kaunitz. That crabbed old man advised the maintenance of a stiff attitude towards France; and this, in her present temper, entailed war.

The last despatch from Vienna to Paris contained strongly worded advice to the French Government and Assembly to adopt a less provocative attitude, to withdraw its troops from the northern frontier, and, above all, to rid itself of the factious minority which controlled its counsels. If Leopold had hoped to intimidate France or to strengthen the peace-party at Paris, he made the greatest mistake of his reign. The war party at once gained the ascendancy, decreed the arrest of Delessart for his tame reply to Vienna, and broke up the constitutional Ministry. Their successors were mainly Girondins. The most noteworthy are Roland, who took the Home Office; Clavière, Finance; and Dumouriez, Foreign Affairs. The last was a man of great energy and resource. A soldier by training, and with a dash of the adventurer in his nature, he now leapt to the front, and astonished France by his zeal and activity. He was not devoid of prudence; for, as appears from Gower's despatch of 30th March, he persuaded the Assembly to postpone action until an answer arrived to his last despatch to Vienna. Gower found from conversation with Dumouriez that a rupture must ensue if a satisfactory reply did not arrive by 15th April.[1] Four days later, as no answer came, the Council of Ministers decided on war; and on the next day Louis formally proposed it to the Assembly, which assented with acclamation.

Secondary causes helped on the rupture. Frederick William encouraged the young Emperor to draw the sword, and led him to expect Alsace and Lorraine as his share of the spoil, the duchies of Jülich and Berg falling to Prussia. Catharine also fanned the crusading zeal at Berlin and Vienna in the hope of having "more elbow-room," obviously in Poland.[2] Further, the news from Madrid and Stockholm indisposed the French Assembly to endure any dictation from Vienna. At the end of February Floridablanca fell from power at Madrid, and his successor, Aranda, showed a peaceful front. And, on 16th March Gustavus of Sweden was assassinated by Anckarström, a tool of the revengeful nobles. This loss was severely felt. The royalist crusade now had no Tancred, only an uninspiring Duke of Brunswick.

Though France took the final step of declaring war, it is now known that Austria had done much to provoke it and nothing to prevent it. The young Emperor refused to withdraw a word of the provocative despatch; and in his letter to Thugut at Brussels, he declared he was weary of the state of things in France and had decided to act and put an end to it; that he should march his troops at once, and the French must be amused for two months until the troops arrived; then, whether the French attacked him or not, he should attack them.[3] Keith also wrote from Vienna to Grenville on 2nd May, that the French declaration of war had come in the nick of time to furnish the Hapsburgs with the opportunity of throwing the odium of the war upon France.[4] Other proofs might be cited; and it seems certain that, if France had not thrown down the gauntlet, both the German Powers would have attacked her in the early summer of 1792. Pitt and Grenville, looking on at these conflicting schemes, formed the perfectly correct surmise that both sides were bent on war, and that little or nothing could be done to avert it.

We must now trace the policy of Pitt somewhat closely. The question at issue is, whether he favoured the royalist or the democratic cause, and was responsible for the ensuing friction between England and France, which culminated in the long and disastrous strifes of 1793-1801.

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[1] "Gower's Despatches," 165, 171.

[2] Sorel, ii, 216.

[3] Fersen, "Diary" (Eng. edit.), 255.

[4] Clapham, "Causes of the War of 1792," 231.

Dumouriez, as we have seen, threw down the gauntlet to Austria in the hope of securing the neutrality of Prussia and the friendship of England. Accordingly he decided to send Talleyrand on a second mission to London. That skilful diplomat had recently returned to Paris; and the Foreign Minister drew up, perhaps in concert with him, a Memoir entitled "Reflections on a Negotiation with England in case of War," which provided the text for Talleyrand's discourse to Pitt and Grenville. The gist of it is that Talleyrand must convince the British Government of the need of a French attack on the Belgic provinces of Austria as the sole means of safety. For, while offensive in appearance, it is in reality defensive. France does not intend to keep those provinces; and, even if her conquest of them brings about the collapse of the Stadholder's power in Holland, England will do well not to intervene in favour of the Orange *régime*. For what good can the Island Power gain by war with France? She may take the French colonies; but that will mean a tiresome struggle with the revolted negroes in the West Indies. France, meanwhile, with her new-born strength, will conquer Central Europe and then throw her energy into her fleet. The better course, then, for England will be to remain neutral, even if Holland be revolutionized, and the estuary of the Scheldt be thrown open to all nations. Or, still better, England may help France to keep in check the King of Prussia and the Prince of Orange. In that case the two free Powers will march hand in hand and "become the arbiters of peace or war for the whole world."

This remarkable pronouncement claims attention for several reasons. Firstly, it proves that Dumouriez and Talleyrand believed their sole chance of safety to lie in the conquest of Austria's Belgic provinces, where a cognate people would receive them with open arms. That is to say, they desired war with Austria, and they did not dread the prospect of war with Prussia, provided that England remained neutral and friendly. Pitt and Grenville were well aware of this from Gower's despatches. Our ambassador had warned them that France recked little of a war with the whole of Europe, provided that England held aloof.

Secondly, this fact disposes of the subsequent charge of Fox against Pitt, that he ought to have sided with France in 1792 and thereby to have prevented the attack of the German Powers. For, as we have seen, it was she who took the irrevocable step of declaring war on Austria; and further, the details given above prove that all that Frenchmen expected from Pitt was neutrality. By remaining neutral, while the French overran Belgium, Pitt was favouring the French plans more than any British statesman had done since the time of James II. Thirdly, we notice in the closing sentences of these Reflections signs of that extraordinary self-confidence which led Girondins and Jacobins to face without flinching even the prospect of war with England.

What was Pitt's conduct at this crisis? He knew enough of the politics of Berlin and Vienna to see that those Courts would almost certainly make war on France. He adopted therefore the line of conduct which prudence and love of peace dictated, a strict neutrality. But he refused to proclaim it to the world, as it would encourage France to attack Austria. At the same time Grenville let it be known that Austria must not be deprived of her Belgic lands, which England had assured to her, firstly by the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), and quite recently by the Reichenbach Convention. As Grenville phrased it—"The Pays Bas form the chain which unites England to the Continent, and the central knot of our relations to Austria and Russia. It would be broken if they belonged to France." Talleyrand and Dumouriez knew this perfectly well, and prudently declared that France had no intention of keeping those lands. Would that the Jacobins and Napoleon had shown the same wise self-restraint! It was their resolve to dominate the Netherlands which brought them into irreconcilable opposition to Pitt and his successors down to the year 1814.

Statesmanlike though the aims of Dumouriez were, they suffered not a little in their exposition. Talleyrand, the brain of the policy, was not its mouthpiece. In the French embassy at Portman Square he figured merely as adviser to the French ambassador, the *ci-devant* Marquis de Chauvelin, a vain and showy young man, devoid of the qualities of insight, tact, and patience in which the ex-bishop of Autun excelled his contemporaries. Had this sage counsellor remained in London to the end of the year, things might have gone very differently. The instructions issued to Chauvelin contain ideas similar to those outlined above; but they lay stress on the utility of a French alliance for England, in order to thwart the aims of a greedy Coalition and to ensure her own internal tranquillity, which, it is hinted, France can easily ruffle. Talleyrand is also charged to offer to cede the small but valuable island, Tobago, which we lost in 1783, provided that the British Government guaranteed a French loan of £3,000,000 or £4,000,000, to be raised in London; and he is to suggest that, if the two Powers acted together, they could revolutionize Spanish America and control the world.[1]

Our curiosity is aroused as to the reception which Pitt and Grenville gave to these schemes. It is not certain, however, that Chauvelin and Talleyrand showed their hand completely; for events told against them from the outset. Chauvelin bore with him an autograph letter from Louis XVI to George III, couched in the friendliest terms, and expressing the hope of closer relations between the two peoples.[2] But before he could present it to the King at St. James's, it appeared in the Paris papers. This breach of etiquette created a bad impression; for it seemed that the letter was merely a bid for an alliance between the two peoples. It is quite possible that Dumouriez, with his natural impulsiveness, allowed it to gain currency in order to identify Louis XVI with French democracy, and that in its turn with public opinion in England. Further, we now know that Marie Antoinette, in her resolve to paralyse the policy and the defensive power of France, wrote at once to Fersen at Brussels that her consort's letter was very far from speaking his real sentiments.[3] This news, when passed on to London, must have made it clear that the two envoys represented the Girondin Ministry, but not the King of France. Then again tidings soon arrived of the disgraceful flight of the French troops on the Belgian frontier, the new levies, at sight of the Austrian horse, rushing back to Lille in wild disorder and there murdering their General, Theobald Dillon. George III and Grenville wrote of this event in terms of disgust and contempt.[4] It is therefore not surprising that the reception of Chauvelin was far from promising; and Talleyrand doubtless felt that the time was not ripe for discussing an Anglo-French *entente* for the control of the world.

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[1] On the Tobago proposal see "Dropmore P.," ii, 260.

[2] Pallain, 215-9. The original is in Pitt MSS., 333.

[3] Fersen, "Diary" (Eng. edit.), 316, 319.

[4] "Dropmore P.," ii, 267. See, too, further details in "Dumouriez and the Defence of England against Napoleon," by J. H. Rose and A. M. Broadley.

In fact, the envoys were received coolly from the outset. The outbreak of war on the Continent had caused almost a panic in the City. The Funds dropped sharply, and Pitt ordered an official denial to sinister reports of a forthcoming raid by the press-gang. A little later he assured a deputation of merchants that England would hold strictly aloof from the war. Chauvelin reported these facts to his Government along with the assurance that the Cabinet had definitely resolved on neutrality. How he came to know of that decision is a mystery; and it is scarcely less odd that a copy of his despatch reporting it should be in the Pitt Papers.[1] On the whole, then, France had good reason to be satisfied with Pitt. Austria, on the other hand, disliked his conduct. Kaunitz, with his usual acerbity, gave out that England was secretly hostile to the House of Hapsburg; and Keith, finding his position increasingly awkward, begged for his recall.

The first sign of friction between England and France arose out of the King's proclamation against seditious writings, which we noticed in the last chapter. Chauvelin complained of some of its phrases, and stated that France waged war for national safety, not for aggrandizement. Grenville thereupon loftily remarked that Chauvelin had no right to express an opinion on a question which concerned solely the King's Government and Parliament. The British reply irritated by its curt correctness.

Equally unfortunate were some incidents in the ensuing debates on this topic. Some members emphasized their loyalty by adverting tartly to the connections of Thomas Paine and English reformers with the French Jacobins. On 31st May the Duke of Richmond charged that writer with being an emissary from abroad, because he had advised the destruction of the British navy.[2] There is no such passage in the "Rights of Man"; and the Duke must have read with the distorting lens of fear or hatred Paine's suggestion that, if England, France, and the United States were allied, a very small navy would be needed, costing not more than half a million a year.[3] But this incident is typical of the prejudice that was growing against France. Grenville in the same debate declared that the Corresponding Societies avowed their connection with foreign clubs and were engaged in circulating pamphlets. The conclusion was obvious, that close relations with France must be avoided. As to the feeling of the Royal Family, it was manifested in an effusively loyal speech by the Prince of Wales, his first speech at Westminster. In it he marked his entire severance from Fox on this question.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 333. Chauvelin to Dumouriez, 28th April.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxix, 1522.

[3] "Rights of Man," pt. ii, ch. v.

Grenville's complaisance to the French envoys was perhaps little more than a blind to mask his contempt for them and their principles. On 19th June he wrote to Auckland respecting the "ignorance and absurdity of the French mission," but suggested that the picking a quarrel with France would only help the English Jacobins to introduce French notions. Even if this mission were got rid of, some one else might come who might make even more mischief. These expressions refer to the connections which Chauvelin and Talleyrand had formed with the Opposition. As Bland Burges remarked: "Talleyrand is intimate with Paine, Horne Tooke, Lord Lansdowne, and a few more of that stamp, and is generally scouted by every one else." George III's words were equally contemptuous and marked his resolve to have as little as possible to do with France.[1] Pitt did not state his opinions on this topic; but he probably held those of Grenville.

The prejudices of the King and the resolves of the two chief Ministers proved fatal to an ardent appeal which came from Paris in the middle of June. As the attitude of the Court of Berlin became more and more warlike, Dumouriez put forth one more effort to gain the friendly mediation of England and thus assure peace with Prussia. Chauvelin, swallowing his annoyance at Grenville's recent note, pointed out that Austria was making great efforts to induce Prussia, Holland, and the lesser German States to join her in the war against liberty. The designs of the monarchs against Poland were notorious; and it was clear that a vast conspiracy was being hatched against the free States of the Continent. Would not England, then, endeavour to stop the formation of this reactionary league?

The occasion was, indeed, highly important. It is conceivable that, if British influence had been powerful at Berlin, a spirited declaration would have had some effect at that Court. Unfortunately our influence had sunk to zero since the Oczakoff fiasco of 1791. Moreover, the Prussian Government had by that time decided to break with France. Her envoys were dismissed from Berlin in the first week of June, and it is probable that Pitt and Grenville by 18th June knew of the warlike resolve of the Prussian Government. In any case, after a delay of twenty days, they sent once more a reply to Chauvelin's request, affirming the earnest desire of His Majesty to contribute to the restoration of peace, but re-asserting his decision in favour of unswerving neutrality. On 24th July Prussia declared war against France, and three days later the Duke of Brunswick issued the famous manifesto to the French people which thrilled the French people with indignation against the hapless sovereigns at the Tuileries whom it was designed to protect.[1]

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 282; "Auckland Journals," ii, 410.

The outbreak of war on the Rhine and Meuse was an event of incalculable importance. As we have seen, Pitt discouraged the bellicose tendencies of the *émigrés* and of the Austrian and Prussian Courts. But the passions of the time ran too high to admit of the continuance of peace; and State after State was soon to be drawn into the devouring vortex of strife. Strange to say the first to suffer from the outbreak of hostilities was Poland. That Republic entered on a new lease of life in the spring of the year 1791. The constitution adopted with enthusiasm on 3rd May substituted an hereditary for an elective monarchy, and otherwise strengthened the fabric of that almost anarchic State. Social and civic reforms promised also to call its burghers and serfs to a life of activity or comfort. But the change at once aroused keen dislike at St. Petersburg and Berlin. Prussian statesmen resented any improvement in the condition of their nominal ally, and declared that, if Russia gained a strong position on the Euxine, Prussia and Austria must secure indemnities at the expense of Poland.

The Czarina soon succeeded in heading them in that direction. After the signature of the Peace of Jassy with the Turks early in January 1792, she began openly to encourage the factious efforts of Polish malcontents. The troubles at Paris also enabled her to engage the Courts of Vienna and Berlin in a western crusade on which she bestowed her richest blessing, her own inmost desires meanwhile finding expression in the following confidential utterance: "I am breaking my head to make the Cabinets of Vienna and Berlin intervene in the affairs of France. I wish to see them plunged into some very complicated question in order to have my own hands free."[1] Though her old opponent, Kaunitz, fathomed her intentions, she partly succeeded in persuading the Austrian and Prussian Ministers that their mission clearly was to stamp out Jacobinism at Paris, while Providence reserved for her the duty of extirpating its offshoots at Warsaw. In the Viennese Court, where the value of a regenerated Poland as a buffer State was duly appreciated, there were some qualms as to the spoliation of that unoffending State; but Prussian politicians, in their eagerness for the Polish districts, Danzig and Thorn, harboured few scruples as to betraying the cause of their allies at Warsaw.

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[1] "Ann. Reg." (1792), 178-82, 225-32; Sorel, ii, 445-54; Heidrich, pt. ii, ch. ii. I fully agree with Dr. Salomon ("Pitt," 537) as to the sincerity of Pitt's desire for neutrality.

Little by little the outlines of a scheme were sketched between Austria and Prussia for securing indemnities for the expenses of the war against France; and it was arranged that Prussia should acquire the coveted lands on the lower Vistula; also Anspach and Baireuth; Austria was to effect the long-desired Belgic-Bavarian exchange, besides gaining parts of Alsace; and it was understood that Russia would annex the Polish Ukraine and work her will in the rest of Poland. The Polish part of the scheme was, however, stiffly opposed by Kaunitz; and in the sequel the old Chancellor ended his long and distinguished career by way of protest against a change of front which he deemed unwise and disgraceful.[2]

Early in May everything was ready for the restoration of anarchy in Poland. Catharine ordered her troops to enter its borders; and the factious Polish nobles whom she had sheltered during the winter returned to their land and formed a "Confederation" at Targowicz on 14th May for the purpose of undoing the reforms of 1791. Daniel Hailes, our envoy at Warsaw, kept Grenville fully informed of this affair. On 16th June he reported Austria's desertion of Poland, the brutal refusal of the Court of Berlin to accord help to its ally, the heroic efforts of Kosciusko and the Polish levies to resist the Russian armies, and the despair of the patriots of Warsaw, adding the cynical comment that at Warsaw patriotism was only a cloak for private interest, and that the new constitution was generally regarded as the death-blow to Polish independence.[1] Whether he added these words to please Grenville, who had always discouraged the Polish cause,[2] is not easy to say; but the statement cannot be reconciled with Hailes's earlier enthusiasm for that well-meant effort.

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[1] Sybel, ii, 142.

[2] For the discussions between the three Powers on Poland see Heidrich, 165-219; and Salomon, "Das Politische System des jüngeren Pitt und die zweite Teilung Polens" (Berlin, 1895).

On all sides the Polish patriots now found indifference or hostility. The Elector of Saxony (their King-elect) gave them cold words; and Catharine demanded the restoration of the old constitution of which she was a guarantor. King Stanislaus, a prey to deep despondency, saw the defence collapse on all sides, and at the close of June the Russians drew near to Warsaw. Many of the Polish reformers fled to Leipzig and there prepared to appeal to Europe against this forcible suppression of a truly national constitution.

Amidst these scenes Hailes was replaced by Colonel Gardiner, who received from Grenville the following instructions, dated 4th August 1792. He informed him that Hailes had last year been charged "to confine himself to such assurances of His Majesty's good wishes as could be given without committing H.M. to any particular line of conduct with respect to any troubles that might arise on the subject [of the Polish Revolution]. The event has unhappily but too well justified their reserve; and the present situation is such as to leave little hope that the tranquillity of that unfortunate land can be restored without its falling again into the most entire dependence on the power of Russia, even if no further dismemberment of territory should take place." Grenville then stated that Prussia's conduct was due to fear of a strong Government in Poland; but the present alternative (a Russian occupation) would probably be worse for her. He added these sentences: "No intervention of the Maritime Powers [England and Holland] could be serviceable to Poland, at least not without a much greater exertion and expense than the importance to their separate interests could possibly justify. . . . You are to be very careful not to do anything which could hold out ill-grounded expectations of support from this country."

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[1] "F. O.," Poland, 6. Hailes to Grenville, 16th and 27th June 1792.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 142; see, too, ii, 279.

In these words Grenville passed sentence of death upon Poland. On this important subject he must have acted with the consent of Pitt; but the opinion of the latter is unknown. It would seem that after the weak treatment of the Oczakoff crisis by Parliament, he gave up all hope of saving either Turkey or Poland. If that was impracticable in the spring of 1791, how much more so in August 1792, when French affairs claimed far closer attention? It is worth noticing that several of the Foxites (not Fox himself, for he was still intent on a Russian alliance),[1] now revised their opinion about Catharine II and inveighed against her for trampling on the liberties of Poland. Did they now discover the folly of their conduct in previously encouraging her?

In despair of help from England, some of the patriots of Warsaw turned towards France. But this added to their misfortunes. It gave the schemers of Berlin the longed-for excuse of intervening by force under the pretext that they must stamp out "the French evil" from States bordering on their own. On hearing of the advance of three Prussian columns, Catharine threw her whole weight into Polish affairs.

So closely did the fortunes of Poland intertwine themselves with those of France. The outbreak of the Franco-Austrian war meant ruin for the reformers at Warsaw. Had Austria held to her former resolve, to prevent the triumph of Russia or Prussia in Poland, it is possible that Pitt and Grenville would have decided to support her. As it was, they maintained their cautious and timid neutrality. The reports of Hailes were explicit enough to show that another partition was at hand; but, so far as I can discover, they lifted not a finger to prevent it. The excess of Pitt's caution at this crisis enables us to gauge the magnitude of the disaster to the Polish cause involved by his surrender to the Czarina in the spring and summer of 1791. By a wonderful display of skill and audacity she emerged triumphant from all her difficulties, and now, while egging on the German Powers to war with France, planted her heel on the liberties of Poland. Her conquest was easy and profitable. The restoration of order at Paris proved to be fraught with unexpected dangers, and the German sovereigns scarcely set their hands to the task before they discovered that they were her dupes. If the French war worked disaster at Warsaw, the prospect of a partition of Poland undoubtedly helped to lessen the pressure on France during the campaign of Valmy. Hope of further spoils in 1794-5 distracted the aims of the Allies; and Pitt was destined to see the efforts of the monarchical league in the West weaken and die away under the magnetic influence of the eastern problem. Well would it have been for him if he could have upheld Poland in 1791. By so doing he would have removed the cause of bitter dissensions between the Houses of Romanoff, Hapsburg, and Hohenzollern. As will appear in due course, Revolutionary France achieved her marvellous triumphs partly by the prowess of her sons, but still more owing to the intrigues and feuds which clogged the efforts of the Allies and baffled the constructive powers of Pitt.

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[1] "Mems. of Fox," iii, 18.

CHAPTER III

PEACE OR WAR?

It seems absolutely impossible to hesitate as to supporting our Ally [Holland] in case of necessity, and the explicit declaration of our sentiments is the most likely way to prevent the case occurring.—PITT TO LORD STAFFORD, 13th November 1792.

ONE of the first requisites for the study of a period whose outlines are well known, is to bar out the insidious notion that the course of events was inevitable. Nine persons out of ten have recourse to that easy but fallacious way of explaining events. The whole war, they say, or think, was inevitable. It was fated that the Duke of Brunswick should issue his threatening manifesto to the Parisians if violence were offered to Louis XVI; that they should resent the threat, rise in revolt, and dethrone the King, and thereafter massacre royalists in the prisons. The innate vigour of the democratic cause further required that the French should stand their ground at Valmy and win a pitched battle at Jemappes, that victory leading to an exaltation of soul in which the French Republicans pushed on their claims in such a way as to bring England into the field. History, when written in this way, is a symmetrical mosaic; and the human mind loves patterns.

But events are not neatly chiselled; they do not fall into geometrical groups, however much the memory, for its own ease, seeks to arrange them thus. Their edges are jagged; and the slightest jar might have sent them in different ways. To recur to the events in question: the Duke of Brunswick objected to issuing the manifesto, and only owing to the weariness or weakness of old age, yielded to the insistence of the *émigrés* at his headquarters: the insurrection at Paris came about doubtfully and fitfully; the issue on 10th August hung mainly on the personal bearing of the King; the massacres were the work of an insignificant minority, which the vast mass regarded with sheer stupefaction; and even the proclamation of the French Republic by the National Convention on 21st September was not without many searchings of heart.[1]

Meanwhile Pitt and Grenville had not the slightest inkling as to the trend of events. The latter on 13th July 1792 wrote thus to Earl Gower at Paris: "My speculations are that the first entrance of the foreign troops [into France] will be followed by negotiations; but how they are to end, or what possibility there is to establish any form of government, or any order in France, is far beyond any conjectures I can form."[2] This uncertainty is illuminating. It shows that Pitt and Grenville were not far-seeing schemers bent on undermining the liberties of France and Britain by a war on which they had long resolved, but fallible mortals, unable to see a handbreadth through the turmoil, but cherishing the hope that somehow all would soon become clear. As to British policy during the summer of 1792, it may be classed as masterly inactivity or nervous passivity, according to the standpoint of the critic. In one case alone did Pitt and Grenville take a step displeasing to the French Government, namely, by recalling Gower from the embassy at Paris; and this was due to the fall of the French monarchy on 10th August, and to the danger attending the residence of a noble in Paris. Only by a display of firmness did Gower and his secretary, Lindsay, succeed in obtaining passports from the new Foreign Minister, Lebrun.[3]

That follower of Dumouriez had as colleagues the former Girondin Ministers, Clavière, Roland, and Servan. Besides them were Monge (the physicist) for the Navy, and Danton for Justice, the latter a far from reassuring choice, as he was known to be largely responsible for the massacres in the prisons of Paris early in September. Little is known about the publicist, Lebrun, on whom now rested the duty of negotiating with England, Spain, Holland, etc. It is one of the astonishing facts of this time that unknown men leaped to the front at Paris, directed affairs to momentous issues, and then sank into obscurity or perished. The Genevese Clavière started assignats and managed revolutionary finance; Servan controlled the War Office for some months with much ability, and then fell; Pétion, Santerre, the popular Paris brewer, and an ex-hawker, Hanriot, were successively rulers of Paris for a brief space.

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[1] Aulard, "La Rév. Franç.," 270-2.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 291.

[3] "Bland Burges P.," 207, 211.

But of all the puzzles of this time Lebrun is perhaps the chief. In his thirtieth year he was Foreign Minister of France, when she broke with England, Holland, Spain, and the Empire. He is believed by many (*e.g.*, by W. A. Miles, who knew him well) to be largely responsible for those wars. Yet who was this Lebrun? Before the Revolution he had to leave France for his advanced opinions, and took refuge at Liége, where Miles found him toiling for a scanty pittance at journalistic hack-work. Suffering much at the hands of the Austrians in 1790, he fled back to Paris, joined the Girondins, wrote for them, made himself useful to Dumouriez during his tenure of the Foreign Office, and, not long after his resignation, stepped into his shoes and appropriated his policy. In order to finish with him here, we may note that he voted for the death of Louis XVI, and, as President of the Executive Council at that time, signed the order for the execution. He and other Girondins were driven from power on 2nd June 1793 (when Hanriot's brazen voice decided the fate of the Girondins) and he was guillotined on 23rd December of that year, for the alleged crime of conspiring to place Philippe Egalité on the throne. Mme. Roland, who helped Lebrun to rise to power, limns his portrait in these sharp outlines: "He passed for a wise man, because he showed no kind of *élan*; and for a clever man, because he was a fairly good clerk; but he possessed neither activity, intellect, nor force of character." The want of *élan* seems to be a term relative merely to the characteristics of the Girondins, who, whatever they lacked, had that Gallic quality in rich measure.

Chauvelin, the French ambassador in London, is another of these revolutionary rockets. Only in fiction and the drama does he stand forth at all clearly to the eye. History knows him not, except that he had been a marquis, then took up with the Girondins, finally shot up among the Jacobins and made much noise by his intrigues and despatches. With all his showiness and vanity he had enough shrewdness to suit his language at the French embassy in Portman Square to the Jacobin jargon of the times. After the September massacres the only hope for an aristocratic envoy was to figure as an irreproachable patriot. Chauvelin's dealings with the English malcontents therefore became more and more pronounced; for indeed they served both as a life insurance and as a means of annoying Pitt and Grenville in return for their refusal to recognize him as the ambassador of the new Republic. Londoners in general sided with the Ministry and snubbed the French envoys. Dumont describes their annoyance, during a visit to Ranelagh, at being received everywhere with the audible whisper, "Here comes the French embassy"; whereupon faces were turned away and a wide space was left around them.[1]

Such, then, were the men on whom largely rested the future of Europe. Lebrun mistook fussiness for activity. At a time when tact and dignity prescribed a diminution of the staff at Portman Square, he sent two almost untried men, Noël and, a little later, Benoît, to help Chauvelin to mark time. Talleyrand also gained permission to return to London as *adjoint* to Chauvelin, which, it appears, was the only safe means of escaping from Paris. Chauvelin speedily quarrelled with him. But the doings of the French embassy concern us little for the present, as Pitt and Grenville paid no attention to the offers, similar to those made in April, which Lebrun charged his envoys to make for an Anglo-French alliance. It is not surprising, after the September massacres, that Ministers should hold sternly aloof from the French envoys; but we may note that Miles considered their attitude most unwise. He further remarked that the proud reserve of Grenville was almost offensive.[2] We made the acquaintance of Miles as British agent at Paris in 1790 and noted his consequential airs. In 1792 they were full blown.

The opinions of George III and Pitt on the events of that bloody harvest-time in Paris are very little known. The King's letters from Weymouth to Pitt in August—September are few and brief. On 16th September, after the arrival of news of the massacres, he writes to say that his decision respecting the Prince of Wales's debts is irrevocable. After that there is a long silence. Pitt's reserve is equally impenetrable. We know, however, from the letters of Burke that the conduct of Ministers deeply disappointed him. Writing to Grenville on 19th September he says that the crisis exceeds in gravity any that is recorded in history; and he adds these curious words: "I know it is the opinion of His Majesty's Ministers that the new [French] principles may be encouraged, and even triumph over every interior and exterior resistance, and may even overturn other States as they have that of France, without any sort of danger of their extending in their consequences to this Kingdom."[1] Can we have a clearer testimony to the calm but rigid resolve with which Pitt and his colleague clung to neutrality? On the following day (the day of the Battle of Valmy) Pitt frigidly declined the request of the Austrian and Neapolitan ambassadors, that the British Government would exclude from its territories all those who should be guilty of an attack on the French royal family. On 21st September Grenville issued a guarded statement on this subject to the *corps diplomatique*; but it was far from meeting the desires of the royalists.[2]

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[1] Dumont, "Souvenirs"; Bulwer Lytton, "Hist. Characters" (Talleyrand).

[2] W. A. Miles, "Corresp.," i, 349-51; Sorel, iii, 18-20.

Reticence is a virtue over-developed in an aristocracy—"that austere domination," as Burke terms it. The virtue is slow in taking root among democracies. The early Radical clubs of Great Britain regarded it as their cherished privilege to state their opinions on foreign affairs with Athenian loquacity; and the months of October and November 1792, when we vainly seek to know the inner feelings of Pitt, are enlivened by resolutions expressing joy at the downfall of tyrants, and fervent beliefs in the advent of a fraternal millennium, the first fruits of which were the election of Paine as deputy for Calais to the National Convention.

In the dealings of nations, as of individuals, feelings often count for more than interests. This was the case in the last four months of the year 1792, when the subjects in dispute bulked small in comparison with the passions and prejudices which magnified and distorted them. The psychology of the time therefore demands no less attention than its diplomacy. Its first weeks were darkened by news of the September massacres. Even now the details of that cowardly crime arouse horror: and surely no part of Carlyle's epic sinks so low as that in which he seeks to compare that loathsome butchery with the bloodshed of a battlefield.[3] No such special pleading was attempted by leaders of thought of that period. On 10th September Romilly, a friend of human progress, wrote to Dumont: "How could we ever be so deceived in the character of the French nation as to think them capable of liberty? . . . One

[1] Burke, "Corresp.," iv, 7.

[2] Sorel, iii, 139.

[3] Carlyle, "Fr. Rev.," iii, bk. i, ch. vi.

might as well think of establishing a republic of tigers in some forest of Africa." To which the collaborator of Mirabeau replied: "Let us burn all our books; let us cease to think and dream of the best system of legislation, since men make so diabolical a use of every truth and every principle."[1] These feelings were general among Frenchmen. Buzot stated that the loss of morality, with all its attendant evils, dated from the September massacres.

It seems strange that the democratic cause made headway in England after this fell event. Probably its details were but dimly known to the poor, who were at this time the victims of a bad harvest and severe dearth. The months of September and October were marked by heavy and persistent rains. The Marquis of Buckingham on 23rd September wrote at Stowe to his brother, Lord Grenville, that he was living amidst a vortex of mud, clay, and water such as was never known before—the result of six weeks of unsettled weather, which must impair the harvest and increase the difficulty of maintaining order.[2] Certainly the stars in their courses fought against the *ancien régime*. The rains which made a receptive seed-bed for the writings of Paine also hampered the progress of Brunswick towards the Argonne, crowded his hospitals with invalids, and in part induced that inglorious retreat. As the storms lasted far into the autumn, disaffection increased apace.

The results serve to enliven the dull tones of our Home Office archives. There one reads of bread riots and meal riots so far back as May 1792, in which stalls are overturned and despoiled; also of more persistent agitation in the factory towns of the North. Liverpool leads off with a dock-strike that is with difficulty ended. Then the colliers of Wigan stop work and seek to persuade all their comrades to follow their example. Most threatening of all is the situation at Manchester and Sheffield. There, in addition to disorder among the townsfolk, disaffection gains ground among the troops sent to keep order. This again is traceable to the dearness of food, for which the scanty pay of the trooper by no means suffices. Here, then, is the opportunity for the apostle of discontent judiciously to offer a cheap edition of the "Rights of Man," on which fare the troop becomes half-mutinous and sends in a petition for higher pay. This the perplexed authorities do not grant, but build barracks, a proceeding eyed askance by publicans and patriots as the beginning of military rule.[1]

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[1] "Mems. of Romilly," i, 351, 352.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 318.

The South of England, too, is beset by fears of a novel kind. After the overthrow of the French monarchy on 10th August fugitives from France come fast to the coasts of Kent and Sussex. The flights become thicker day by day up to the end of that fell month of September. Orthodox priests, always in disguise, form the bulk of the new arrivals. As many as 700 of them land at Eastbourne, and strain the hospitality of that little town. About as many reach Portsmouth and Gosport, to the perplexity of the authorities. When assured that they are staunch royalists and not apostles of Revolution, the commander allots shelter in the barracks at Forton, where for the present they exist on two pence a day each. Plymouth, which receives fewer of them, frowns on the newcomers as politically suspect and economically ruinous. The mayor assures Dundas that, if more priests arrive, or are sent there, they will be driven away by the townsfolk for fear of dearth of corn. In Jersey the food question eclipses all others; for 2,000 priests (so it is said) land there, until all ideas of hospitality are cast to the winds and the refugees are threatened with expulsion. Only in the vast obscurantism of London is there safety for these exiles. A subscription list is started on their behalf; the King offers the royal house at Winchester for the overplus at Portsmouth: and by degrees the scared throngs huddle down into the dire poverty and uneasy rest that are to be their lot for many a year.[2]

Strange adventures befell many of the French nobles in their escape. The Duc de Liancourt, commanding the troops at Rouen, was fain to flee to the coast, hire a deckless craft, and conceal himself under faggots. In that manner he put to sea and finally made the opposite coast at Hastings. There, still nervous, he made his way to the nearest inn, and, to proclaim his insularity, called for porter. The beverage was too much for him, and he retired to his room in a state of unconscious passivity. On his awaking, the strange surroundings seemed those of a French lock-up; but as he crept down to make his escape, the mugs caught his eye; and their brightness convinced him that he was in England. Such was his story, told to the family at Bury, where Fanny Burney was staying. Several of the wealthier French refugees settled at Richmond, and there found Horace Walpole as charmer and friend. But the most distinguished group was that at Juniper Hall, near Dorking, where finally Mme. de Staël and Talleyrand enlivened the dull days and long drives with unfailing stores of wit. We shall later on make the acquaintance of the French *émigrés* in a more active and bellicose mood.

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 19, 20.

[2] *Ibid.* In all, 3,772 French refugees landed in September 1792 ("Ann. Reg." 39). The first subscription for them realized £1,468. Burke gave £20.

Such, then, was the mental condition of our folk. Depressed by rain and dear food, beset by stories of plotters from Paris, or harrowed by the tales of misery of the French *emigrés*, Britons came to look on France as a land peopled by demons, who sought to involve other lands in the ruin to which they had reduced their own. In this state of nervousness and excitement little was needed to bring about a furious reaction on behalf of Church and King.

The follies of English democrats helped on this reaction. Whispers went about of strange and threatening orders of arms at Birmingham. A correspondent at the midland capital informed Dundas at the end of September that a Dr. Maxwell, of York, had ordered 20,000 daggers, which were to be 12 inches in the blade and 5¼ inches in the handle. The informant convinced the manufacturer that he must apprise the Home Secretary of this order and send him a specimen of the weapon. Probably it was the same which Burke melodramatically cast down on the floor of the House of Commons during his speech of 28th December. The dimensions exactly tally with those named by the biographer of Lord Eldon, who retained that dagger, though Bland Burges also put in a claim to have possessed it. The scepticism which one feels about this prodigious order of daggers, which others give as 3,000, is somewhat lessened by finding another letter, of 2nd October 1792, addressed to Dundas by James Maxwell of York, who stated that he highly disapproved of the "French" opinions of his younger brother (specimens of whose letters he enclosed), and had just given him £500 so as to dissuade him from going to Manchester to stir up discontent there.[1] This unbrotherly conduct condemns the elder Maxwell, but his information to some extent corroborated that which came from Birmingham. The whole affair may have been merely a device to frighten Ministers; but report says that Pitt took it seriously and ascribed to him the singular statement that Ministers soon might not have a hand to act with or a tongue to speak with.[1]

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 21; Twiss, "Life of Lord Eldon," i, 218; "Bland Burges P.," 203. Our agent, Munro, on 17th December 1792 reported from Paris: "Dr. Maxwell has at last obtained a company in the French

Certainly there was a good deal of discontent in the manufacturing towns, but it is not easy to say whether it resulted more from dear food or from political reasons. At Stockport a new club styled "The Friends of universal Peace and the Rights of Man," issued and circulated a manifesto asserting their right to inquire into political affairs:

> It is our labour that supports monarchy, aristocracy, and the priesthood. . . . We are not the "swinish multitude" that Mr. Burke speaks of. A majority of the House of Commons is returned by less than 6,000 voters; whereas, if the representation were equal (and we sincerely hope that it shortly will be), nearly that number will elect every single member. Not one-twentieth part of the commoners of Great Britain are electors. . . . We have a National Debt of more than £270,000,000, and pay £17,000,000 a year in taxes. More than one fourth of our incomes goes in taxes.[2]

The Radical clubs also showed a desire to pry into foreign affairs; witness the following letter from Thomas Hardy to Dr. Adams, Secretary of the London Society for Constitutional Information:

> No. 9 Piccadilly (London), *Sept.* 21 1792.[3]
>
> The London Corresponding Society having taken the resolution of transmitting to the French National Convention an address . . . to assure that suffering nation that we sympathize with them in their misfortunes; that we view their exertions with admiration; that we wish to give them all such contenance [*sic*] and support as individuals unsupported and oppressed themselves can afford; and that, should those in power here dare (in violation of the nation's pledged faith of neutrality and in opposition to the well-known sentiments of the people at large) to join the German band of despots united against Liberty, we disclaim all concurrence therein, and will to a man exert every justifiable means

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service, and I understand is soon to leave this to join the army" (Gower's "Despatches," 260). Mr. Elgar has not been able to trace him afterwards.

[1] Massey, iv, 45. This was said to be spoken to Bland Burges; but the papers of the latter (p. 204) contain no reference to it.

[2] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 21

[3] *Ibid.*

> for counteracting their machinations against the freedom and happiness of mankind.
>
> I am ordered by the Committee to acquaint the Society for Constitutional Information therewith, in order to be favoured with their opinions thereon, and in hopes that, if they approve the idea and recommend its adoption to the different societies, the publication of such a respectable number of *real* names will greatly check the hostile measures which might otherwise be put in execution.

On 5th October the Society for Constitutional Information agreed to the plan, and ordered the drafting of a joint address to the French Convention. By this time the news of the successful stand of the French troops against the Allies at Valmy and the subsequent retreat of the latter greatly encouraged the English democrats; and a more militant tone appears in their addresses. Thus in that meeting of 5th October a letter was read from Joel Barlow containing these sentences: "A great Revolution in the management of the affairs of nations is doubtless soon to be expected through all Europe; and in the progress of mankind towards this attainment it is greatly to be desired that the convictions to be acquired from rational discussion should precede and preclude those which must result from physical exertion."

Why "precede and preclude"? The two expressions are incompatible. It seems that some more moderate member must have added the latter word as a sop to the authorities. In any case the last words of the sentence were clearly intended as a threat. On 26th October, John Frost being in the chair, the same Society framed the following resolution:

> That the Secretary do procure correct copies of the Manifesto published by the late General Burgoyne while in America, of the first Manifesto lately published by the Duke of Brunswick in France, of the last Royal Proclamation against writings and meetings in England, and of the Emperor's recent proclamation at Brussels on the same subject; in order that these four pieces may be printed fairly together on one sheet of paper, and be transmitted by this Society to all the associated Societies in Great Britain.[1]

It was then resolved to publish this resolution in the "Argus," "Morning Chronicle,"[2] "Star," "Morning Post," "English

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 21.

[2] Miles ("Corresp.," 333) states that the editors of the "Argus" and

Chronicle," "World," and "Courier." These papers supported the democratic cause. In order to counteract their influence Pitt and his colleagues about this time helped to start two newspapers, "The Sun" and "The True Briton," the advent of which was much resented by Mr. Walter of "The Times," after his support of the Government.[1] Apparently these papers were of a more popular type, and heralded the advent of a cheap and sensational royalism. Sheridan wittily advised that the motto of "The Sun" should be, not merely the beginning, but the whole of the passage:

> Solem quis dicere falsum
> Audeat? Ille etiam caecos instare tumultus
> Saepe monet, fraudemque, et operta tumescere bella.[2]

The combined address from several patriotic (*i.e.* reform) societies, arranged for by Thomas Hardy, was not read at the bar of the French Convention until 7th November. It set forth that the five thousand signatories indignantly stepped forth to rescue their country from the opprobrium thrown upon it by the base conduct of the Government. In vain did Ministers seek to overawe the timid and mislead the credulous: for Knowledge and Reason were making great strides in England, so that Britons now looked on Frenchmen only as "citizens of the world, children of the common Father," not as enemies to be assassinated "at the command of weak or ambitious Kings, or of corrupt Ministers." Their real enemies were the destructive aristocracy, "the bane of all the countries of the earth. You have acted wisely in banishing it from France." They (the signatories) could not take up arms to help France, because the Government had pledged the national faith that it would remain neutral. The Elector of Hanover had joined his troops to those of traitors and robbers; "but the King of England will do well to remember that England is not Hanover; should he forget this, we will not forget it. . . . We ardently wish a Triple Alliance, not of crowned heads, but of the people of America, France, and Great Britain will give liberty to Europe and peace

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"Morning Chronicle" were regularly paid by the French Embassy and were often there.

[1] "Bland Burges P.," 227-9.

[2] Virgil, "Georgics," i, 463-5. "Who would dare call the sun a liar? In truth, he often warns of the approach of hidden seditions and of the swellings of treachery and strifes yet unseen."

to the world." The address was signed by Margarot and Hardy. It and other addresses were reported verbatim by our *chargé d'affaires*, Munro, to the Foreign Office.[1]

The democratic ferment in England speedily aroused a decided opposition. Macaulay probably does not much exaggerate when he says that out of twenty well-to-do persons nineteen were ardently loyal and firmly anti-Jacobin. The month of November saw the formation of an "Ante [*sic*]-Levelling Society, for supporting the Civil Power in suppressing Tumults and maintaining the constitutional Government of this Country in King, Lords, and Commons." Its programme leaves much to be desired in the matter of style, but nothing in respect to loyalty.[2] The club was founded by Reeves and others. Hardy notes in his memoirs that it soon began to do much harm to the Corresponding Society.

Far aloof from this turmoil stands the solitary and inscrutable figure of Pitt. At this time he was leading, almost with ostentation, the life of a country gentleman, dividing his time between Holwood and Walmer Castle. Very few of his letters of this period survive. Writing from Walmer on 16th October to Grenville, he makes merely a verbal alteration in an important despatch on which the latter consulted him. Indeed he left the conduct of foreign affairs to Grenville far more fully than he had done to the Duke of Leeds. I have found no draft of a despatch written wholly by Pitt at the time, or indeed at the crisis that followed. There is, however, a significant phrase in his letter to Grenville, that, if the French retained Savoy, this would bring about a new order of things.[3] For the most part Pitt at this time gave himself up to rest and recreation at Walmer Castle. The charm of the sea and of the Downs seems to have laid hold on him; for General Smith, writing to Lord Auckland from Walmer, says that Pitt is soon in love with the King's present and gladly spends there all the time he can spare. Lord and Lady Chatham were with him and encouraged his passion for that retired spot. A little later he had a flying visit from one who was to become a devoted friend, the brilliant and versatile Earl of Mornington. Coming over from Ramsgate and lunching at Walmer, he found that Pitt had so far taken up with country sports as to follow the hounds in chase of "a basketted hare."

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[1] "F. O.," France, 40.

[2] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 22.

[3] "Dropmore P.," ii, 322.

Apart from the bad harvest and the spectre of want which crept over the country, Pitt found little to alarm him at this time. In preparation for the opening of Parliament, he distributed to each of his friends six printed copies of his speech on the abatement of the Spanish armament taxes, for the purpose of circulation in the country.[1] Clearly he thought that the proposed economies in the public services would salve the prevailing discontent. At the close of October the French agent, Noël, reported to Lebrun that Pitt was not arming, and was still inclined to hold aloof from French affairs.[2] In fact, so late as 6th November, Grenville wrote to Auckland that on all grounds non-intervention in continental affairs is the best policy for Great Britain.[3]

But now a time drew near when anger was to expel calculation; when the impulses of the populace flung aside the counsels of statesmen, and the friends of universal peace helped to loose the dogs of war. This new phase in the life of Europe opened up when the dense columns of Dumouriez drove the thin lines of Austria from a strong position at Jemappes (6th November). Mons opened its gates on the following day; and the other towns of Belgium speedily followed suit, the French receiving a hearty welcome everywhere. The conquest of the Belgic Provinces puffed up the French with boundless pride mingled with contempt for the old Governments; and these feelings awakened a formidable response in these islands. The news of the conquest of the Pays Bas by the *sansculottes*, received with bewilderment and disgust in Piccadilly, aroused wild hopes among the weavers of Spitalfields. "The activity and insolence of the French emissaries and their allies in this country have certainly increased much with Dumouriez's success," so wrote Grenville to Auckland on 26th November.

In these days we smile at the notion of foreign agents influencing public opinion; but it seems certain that Chauvelin and his staff made persistent efforts to fan the embers of discontent into a flame.[4] Lord Sheffield declared that even the neighbourhood of Sheffield Park, near Lewes, was thoroughly worked by French emissaries; but it is not unlikely that landlord nervousness transfigured some wretched refugees, on their way from the coast, into Jacobinical envoys. Certainly the town which gave him his title was in a dangerous state. An officer stationed there describes the joy of the men of Sheffield in celebrating Dumouriez' victory. They roasted an ox whole, devoured it, and then formed a procession, 10,000 strong, behind the French tricolour and a picture which represented Dundas stabbing Liberty and Burke treading down "the swinish multitude." He states that they were enrolled in Corresponding Societies, had bought firearms, and were seeking to corrupt the soldiery.[1]

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[1] "Auckland Journals," ii, 449, 455; "Dropmore P.," ii, 324.

[2] Sorel, iii, 143.

[3] "Auckland Journals," ii, 465.

[4] On 24th November Noël wrote from London to Lebrun: "Tous les symptômes annoncent que les mouvements révolutionnaires ne peuvent être éloignés." Quoted by Sorel, iii, 214. See, too, Ernouf's "Maret," p. 84.

Derby seems to have been equally fervid, if we may judge by the address which on 20th November went from its branch of the Society for Constitutional Information to the French National Convention, couched in these terms. "It was reserved for the Gallic Republic to break the accursed knot which has leagued Kings for ages past against the rest of the world. Reason and Philosophy are making great strides; and precedent and hereditary notions go fast to decline. By teaching mankind that they are all equal in rights, you have dedicated a glorious edifice to Liberty, which must hereafter prove the dungeon of tyrants and the asylum of the oppressed."[2]

Still more seditious was the action of the London Corresponding Society. On 28th November Joel Barlow and John Frost, deputed by that body, presented an address to the French Convention, congratulating it on the triumphs of liberty, and assured Frenchmen that innumerable societies and clubs were springing up in England. "After the example given by France," they said, "Revolutions will become easy. Reason is about to make rapid progress; and it would not be extraordinary if in a much less space of time than can be imagined, the French should send addresses of congratulation to a National Convention of England." They then informed the French deputies that 1,000 pairs of shoes had come from the Society as a gift to the soldiers of liberty, and the gift would be repeated weekly for the next six weeks. They also presented an address which ended thus: "Other nations will soon follow your steps in this career of improvement, and, rising from their lethargy, will arm themselves for the purpose of claiming the Rights of Man with that all-powerful voice which man cannot resist." Next came a deputation from the English and Irish residents in Paris, which assured the French deputies that a majority of the British people desired to copy their example, and that the old Governments would soon survive merely as a memory. The three addresses aroused immense enthusiasm, and a decree was passed for their printing and circulation.[1]

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[1] "Auckland Journals," ii, 481. Tomline, iii, 458, 459. Burke's unfortunate phrase in the "Reflections": "Learning will be cast into the mire and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude."

[2] B.M. Place MSS., vol. entitled "Libel, Sedition, Treason, Persecution."

These ecstatic praises of the Convention sounded oddly, as that body had just been discussing a petition from several Parisians who had lately been imprisoned without knowing why or by whom. And the Belfast address of congratulation on the progress of religious liberty was followed by the complaints of two members of the Convention that they had been half drowned at Chartres for a profession of atheism.[2] But undoubtedly these addresses by British Radicals caused exultation on both sides of the Channel. Frenchmen believed that our people were about to overthrow the Cabinet;[3] while the visitors returned home to trumpet forth the triumphs of Reason and the doom of Tyranny.

Certainly the action of the French Convention seemed to assume the speedy advent of a Jacobinical millennium. To the eye of faith the headlong flight of the Austrians from Belgium opened up boundless vistas of conquest, or rather, of fraternization with liberated serfs. Consequently the month from 16th November to 15th December witnessed the issue of four defiantly propagandist decrees. That of 16th November enjoined on French generals the pursuit of the Austrians on to any territory where they might find refuge—obviously a threat to the German and Dutch States near at hand. On the same day the French deputies decreed freedom of navigation on the estuary of the River Scheldt within the Dutch territory, which that people had strictly controlled since the Treaty of Münster (1648). In this connection it is well to remember that the right of the Dutch to exclude foreigners from that estuary had been recognized by France in five treaties signed with Great Britain since the Peace of Utrecht. Further, by the Anglo-Dutch alliance of the year 1788, we had covenanted to uphold the rights of the Dutch in this and other respects. Thus, the French Republic was taking upon itself to rescind a well-established right of the Dutch Republic.

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[1] "Moniteur," 29th November 1792.

[2] "Residence in France in 1792-5," by an English Lady, i, 190-2.

[3] Auckland says ("Journals," ii, 473) he has seen Paris bulletins and letters which counted absolutely on a revolt in England.

There is, however, another side to this question. The law of Nature, as distinct from the law of nations, forbade the barring of a navigable river to the commerce of aliens; and in this particular case the exclusive privileges retained by the Dutch had almost strangled the trade of Antwerp. Visitors describe the desolate aspect of the quays and streets in a city which was clearly designed to be one of the great marts of the world. Of this gospel of Nature, as set forth by Rousseau, the French were the interpreters; but they would have done well to appeal to Holland and Great Britain to abrogate this odious privilege, adding also the assurance, formerly given by Dumouriez, that Belgium would never become French.

Unfortunately the disinterested character of the crusade for liberty was now belied by two additional decrees which created the worst possible impression. On 19th November the French Convention declared its resolve to "grant fraternity and assistance to all people who wish to recover their liberty," and further ordered its generals to give effect to this decree. Eight days later it rescinded the former resolution, that France would make no conquests, by ordering the incorporation of Savoy in the French Republic. The priest Grégoire was equal to the task of proving that this involved no contradiction of the former principle, because the Savoyards wished to join France and Nature herself had proclaimed the desirability of union. By the same patriotic logic France could rightfully absorb all parts of the Continent where Jacobins abounded and natural frontiers were lacking.

These decrees brought about an entirely new situation. The annexation of Savoy furnished a practical commentary on the airy proposals announced on 16th and 19th November; but these alone were sufficient to cause Pitt and Grenville the deepest concern. On the 27th the latter wrote to Auckland at The Hague in terms which show his conviction that France meant to revolutionize the Dutch Republic, and also, if possible, Great Britain. Respecting the decrees of the 16th and 19th he wrote:

"The whole is a concerted plan to drive us to extremities, with a view of producing an impression in the interior of the country."[1] That is, he believed the Convention to be set on forcing England either to declare war, or to give way disgracefully; and in either case the result would be an increase of seditious feeling in these islands. This continued to be his view. For on 4th December, after reading the seditious addresses of the English societies to the Convention, he wrote again to Auckland that the French evidently relied on the malcontents both in England and Holland to paralyse the Governments; and, he added, "This is above all others a reason for firmness in the present moment, and for resisting, while the power of resistance is yet in our hands. For the success of their unfounded claims would not only give rise to new pretensions, but would give them additional influence."[2] Pitt's views were the same, though he stated them more firmly and not as an alarmist. On 9th December he wrote to the Earl of Westmorland, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, that the gross disregard of treaties shown of late by France, her encouragement of the spirit of revolt in all lands, and her public reception of addresses from English societies, "full of treasonable sentiments," compelled the Government, though very reluctantly, to add to the armed forces. He added these words: "I am clear that the circumstances require vigour and decision both at home and abroad. And the spirit of the country seems within these last ten days to have taken so favourable a turn that I think we may look with great confidence to the event."[3] Thus Pitt and Grenville equally felt the need of firmness in resisting the French decrees, partly because of their aggressive and illegal nature, but also because surrender would inflate the spirits of British malcontents.

Current events served to strengthen this opinion. France had hitherto won all the points of the game by sheer audacity. Everywhere she had attacked, and everywhere she had found unexpected weakness. Custine's army had extorted a forced loan from Frankfurt. Dumouriez was threatening Aix-la-Chapelle on the east, and the Dutch on the north. The spirit which animated the French Foreign Office appears in the letter which Lebrun, its chief, wrote to Dumouriez on 22nd November: "To the glory of having freed the Belgian Catholics, I hope you will join that of delivering their Batavian brothers from the yoke of the Stadholder."[1] There can be no doubt that the general laid his plans for that purpose, though he also sent pacific overtures to Auckland at The Hague.[2]

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 344. Grenville to Auckland, 27th November.

[2] *Ibid.*, 351-2.

[3] Salomon, "Pitt," 599.

To crown the indignation of royalists, there came the tidings that on 3rd December the French Convention decreed the trial of Louis XVI for high treason against the nation. The news aroused furious resentment; but it is noteworthy that Pitt and Grenville rarely, if ever, referred to this event; and that, before it was known, they had declared the impossibility of avoiding a rupture with the French Government if it persisted in adhering to the November decrees. On this question the final court of appeal is the despatches and letters of our Ministers. An examination of them discloses the reasons for their firmness. On 13th November, when the evacuation of Brussels by the Austrians was known, Ministers assured the Dutch Government that they would oppose a French invasion of Holland. They charged Auckland to declare that His Majesty had "no hesitation as to the propriety of his assisting the Dutch Republic as circumstances might require, against any attempt on the part of any other Power to invade its dominions or to disturb its Government." This declaration was to be published in order to discourage the plots of the Dutch "Patriots," and to warn the French Government and its general of the danger of a hostile advance. Auckland replied on 16th November: "It is impossible to convey to Your Lordships an adequate sense of the impression made by this voluntary declaration of His Majesty's sentiments and intentions respecting the Republic on the occasion of the present crisis. The generosity of this measure, which in a few hours was generally known, and which to-morrow will be circulated on the Continent in the newspapers of the Republic, is acknowledged by everyone." The Prince of Orange at once wrote to thank the King for this proof of his friendship, and added the suggestion that the anchoring of a British squadron in the Downs would, more than anything else, tend to "hold in check our enemies."[3]

Pitt and Grenville did not comply with this last request; and the British declaration itself came just two days too late to give pause to the National Convention, before it published the decree on the opening of the Scheldt. Possibly in the days of telegraphs the warning would have been flashed from The Hague to Paris in time. As it was, both Powers publicly committed themselves on the same day to opposite courses of action from which pride or conviction forbade them to recede. So narrow sometimes is the space that at first divides the paths leading towards peace and war.

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[1] Rojas, "Miranda dans la Rév. Franç.," 3-4.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 339, 341, 343; "Auckland Journals," ii, 471; Lecky, vi, 70-4.

[3] "F. O.," Holland, 40.

The concern of Pitt and Grenville at the French conquest of Belgium appears in their instructions to Stratton, our *chargé d'affaires* at Vienna, to confer with the Austrian Chancellor, Cobenzl, on the threatening situation, setting forth the desire of George III to contribute to the tranquillity of all the States of Europe. In his reply of 22nd December Cobenzl declared that Austria and Prussia must have indemnities for their expenses in the war, the restoration of monarchy at Paris being another essential to a settlement.[1] These statements were most discouraging: the former pointed to a speedy partition of Poland; and the forcible restoration of the Bourbons was at this time wholly repugnant to the feelings of Pitt.

Meanwhile the prospect of war with France had become far more threatening. The decree of 16th November on the Scheldt, and that of 19th November on helping foreign malcontents, were a direct defiance to all neighbouring States, and especially to Great Britain and Holland. In the latter country the Patriots were, as in 1787, actively helped from Paris, and threatened the existence of the Orange *régime*, of which we were the guarantors. Moreover, the opening of the Scheldt was a serious blow to Dutch commerce. Sir James Harris, writing from The Hague in December 1784, when this very question brought Joseph II to the brink of war with Holland, quoted the declaration of the Grand Pensionary, that the Dutch ought to spend their last florin "rather than submit to so destructive and humiliating a measure as the opening of the Scheldt."[2] The effusive thanks of the Dutch when the Court of Versailles opposed the demand of Joseph II, shows that they looked on the control of that estuary as vital to their interests. This question was brought to an issue on 23rd November, when French gunboats entered the Scheldt, and, despite the fire of the Dutch guardship, made their way up the river in order to assist in the reduction of the citadel of Antwerp. The senior captain of the gunboats announced that he did this by order of Dumouriez. On 8th December seven French ships sailed up to that city, the first since the Treaty of Münster.

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 31, 32. See, too, Vivenot, ii, 446, 447.

[2] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 89, 90.

The affair of the Scheldt was not the only cause of alarm. The Dutch authorities managed to get a copy of a secret letter (dated 20th November) from Dumouriez to Maulde, French envoy at The Hague, in which he assured him that he would do his best to keep him in that post (despite the ill will of the Paris Government); for he had much need of him for certain negotiations. He added these words: "I count on carrying liberty to the Batavians (Dutch) as I have done to the Belgians; also that the Revolution will take place in Holland so that things will return to the state they were in 1788." The Dutch Government gave a copy of this letter to Auckland, who forwarded it to Grenville on 23rd November. It reached Whitehall three days later. Curiously enough, Grenville did not hear of the French decree for the opening of the Scheldt until 26th November. But on that day he wrote to Auckland a despatch which shows his conviction that France meant to force us into war, and that the chief question for Great Britain and Holland now was—when should hostilities begin? Clearly, then, Grenville, and probably Pitt, regarded a rupture with France as unavoidable, unless she revoked the aggressive decrees. Nevertheless they decided to send a special envoy to Paris, and drew up rough drafts undated and addressed to some person unnamed, bidding him make careful inquiries into the state of affairs at that capital.

We cannot wonder that Pitt took a gloomy view of things; for on 24th November a "moderate" member of the French Convention proposed an addition to the decree of 19th November (offering help to malcontents in other States), so as to limit it to nations with which France was at war. This proposal—obviously designed to soothe the apprehensions of Pitt—displeased the "patriotic" majority, which disposed of it by carrying the "previous question." After this the decree of 19th November could no longer be treated as a meaningless effervescence of Gallic enthusiasm; and, when taken with the disloyal addresses presented by certain English clubs on 28th November, its reaffirmation produced the worst possible impression.

On the 29th, Nagel, the Dutch envoy in London, proffered a personal appeal for help, in addition to requests which he had made to Grenville a few days before. He further begged him to order the assembling of a squadron at the Downs, or at Gravesend, so as to assist the Dutch speedily, if need arose.[1] Meanwhile our allies (as usually happens with small States in presence of danger) sought to temporize; and herein, as also in the caution of Pitt and Grenville, lay the reason why war did not break out at once. No one can peruse the despatches of our Ministers without seeing that they considered war inevitable, unless the French retracted the obnoxious decrees. It is well to notice that at this time the question of the trial of Louis XVI had not come up for consideration. The dispute turned solely on the frontier rights of the Dutch, which Pitt and his colleagues believed to be violated by France, and which we were in honour bound to vindicate.

On 1st December, then, came the first of those precautionary measures which not seldom precipitate the conflict they are designed to avert. The Cabinet issued a royal proclamation, calling out part of the militia. Ministers took this step partly as a retort to the seditious addresses of English Radical clubs to the French Convention,[2] partly in order to repress tumults. There had been rioting in a few towns, and the reports from Scotland were alarming. On 22nd November Dundas, writing to Pitt from Melville Castle, N.B., stated that sedition had spread rapidly of late in Scotland, and he estimated that five regiments would be needed to hold down Dundee, Perth, and Montrose. He added that the clergy of the Established Church and their following were loyal, the others far otherwise.[3]

Still worse was the news from Ireland. Early in 1792 the Dublin Parliament repealed one or two of the most odious statutes against Roman Catholics; but later in the year contumeliously rejected their petition for the franchise. Consequently the mass of Irishmen was ready to join the Society of United Irishmen, a formidable association founded in Ulster in 1791 by Wolfe Tone. This able young lawyer, fired with zeal for the French Revolution, conceived the statesmanlike notion of banding together both Presbyterians and Catholics in a national movement against the exclusive and dominant English caste. The conduct of the Dublin Parliament made his dream a reality. At once the ultra-Protestant traders of the North clasped hands with the Catholic gentry and peasants of the Centre and South. This unheard-of union was destined to lead Pitt on to a legislative experiment which will concern us later. Here we may notice that the clubs of Irish malcontents proceeded to act on a plan already mooted in the English societies, that of sending delegates to form a National Convention in Dublin. The aim was to constitute a body far more national than the corrupt Protestant clique that sat in Parliament, and, after overawing that body, to sunder the connection with England. The precedent set by the Ulster Volunteers in their meeting at Dungannon in 1782 warranted the hope of an even completer triumph than was then secured. The correspondence that passed between Pitt and the Lord-Lieutenant, Westmorland, reveals the concern which they felt at the news. Pitt advised the early meeting of the Dublin Parliament, the proposal of concessions sufficient to allay discontent, and a determined resistance to all attempts at intimidation. He also suggested the keeping a close watch on the importation of arms, and levying a Militia if it were practicable.[1] In reply Westmorland stated (1st December) that the manifesto of a meeting of United Irishmen in Dublin was most threatening, and that the "French mania" was spreading everywhere. He added: "Belfast is, as always, noisy and republican; but not above 200 or 300 Volunteers are there."[2] It seems probable that the embodying of the Militia in Great Britain was partly with the view of enabling a few regular regiments to proceed to Ireland.

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[1] "F. O.," Holland, 41. This despatch, and the letter of the Prince of Orange referred to above, correct the statement of Mr. Browning ("Varennes," etc., 191) and Mr. Hammond ("Fox," 257), that the Dutch did not call upon us for help. This was asserted by Lord Lansdowne on 21st December, but his information was unofficial and is refuted by that given above.

[2] Marsh, "Politics of Great Britain and France," i, 260-2. The militia were not called out in Surrey, Herts, Berks, and Bucks ("Dropmore P.," ii, 348).

[3] Pretyman MSS.

While taking these precautionary measures, Pitt and Grenville adopted a tone far from unfriendly to the French envoy. Earlier in the autumn Grenville refused to see Chauvelin on the ground that the French Government which sent him no longer existed. But after some *pourparlers* he consented to receive him on 29th November. With his usual *hauteur* he prepared to teach the ex-Marquis his place from the outset. He placed for him a stiff small chair; but the envoy quickly repelled the slight and vindicated the honour of the Republic by occupying the largest arm-chair available. After this preliminary skirmish things went more smoothly; but only the briefest summary of their conversation can be given here. Chauvelin assured Grenville of the desire of France to respect the neutrality of the Dutch, though they had fired on two French vessels entering the Scheldt. The opening of that river, he said, was a right decreed by Nature, and confirmed to France by the conquest of Brabant—a point which he pressed Grenville to concede. He then charged England with unfriendly conduct in other respects. In reply Grenville said that he welcomed this informal explanation, but he declined to give any assurance on the Scheldt affair. If (said he) France and England were not on good terms, it was not the fault of the latter Power, which had consistently remained neutral but declined to allow the rights of its Allies to be violated.[1]

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[1] Pitt to Westmorland, 14th October and 18th November 1792, in Salomon, "Pitt" (App.); "Dropmore P.," ii, 318, 320-3, 328, 330, 333, 336; "Mems. of Lord Ed. Fitzgerald," 155-60.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

Equally firm, though more affable, was the behaviour of Pitt in an interview of 2nd December with a Frenchman who was destined to become Foreign Minister under Napoleon. Maret, the future Duc de Bassano, at this time made a very informal *début* on the stage of diplomacy. Despite many statements to the contrary it is certain that he had no official position in England. He came here merely in order to look after the affairs of the Duke of Orleans, especially to bring back his daughter, who had for some time resided in Suffolk with Mme. de Genlis and "Pamela." Maret's own words to Miles are decisive on this point: "I was not a secret agent; I had no authority to treat, nor had I any mission; and in declaring this to Mr. Pitt and to you I said nothing but the truth."[2] With characteristic mendacity Lebrun afterwards informed the Convention that Maret was a secret agent and that Pitt had requested an interview with him. The interview came about owing to the exertions of William Smith, M.P., a well-intentioned Whig, who hoped much from an informal conversation between Pitt and one of the head clerks of the French Foreign Office. Chauvelin viewed it with jealousy, it being his aim to represent Maret as an emissary to the British and Irish malcontents.[1] Pitt, when he granted the interview, cannot have known of this, or of the design of Lebrun ultimately to foist Maret into the place of Morgues at the French Embassy. Accordingly he welcomed Maret cordially. No tactical skirmish about chairs took place, and Maret afterwards declared that the great Minister behaved affably throughout, brightening his converse at times by a smile. As the personality of the two statesmen and the gravity of the crisis invest this interview with unique interest, Pitt's account of it, which is in the Pretyman MSS., must be given almost in full.

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[1] "F. O.," France, 40. For Grenville's account of the interview, see "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies."

[2] Miles, "Correspondence," ii, 46; see, too, Ernouf, "Maret," 89, 95. This corrects the mis-statement of Lecky (vi, 94) on this topic.

> He [Maret] expressed his regret at the distant and suspicious terms on which England and France appeared to stand, his readiness to give me any *éclaircissement* he could, and his belief that the present French Government would be very glad if means could be found by private agents, with no official character, to set on foot a friendly explanation.
>
> I told him that, if they were desirous of such an explanation, it seemed to me much to be wished under the critical circumstances; as we might by conversing freely learn whether it was possible to avoid those extremities which we should very much regret but which seemed from what we saw of the conduct and designs of France to be fast approaching; and I then mentioned to him distinctly that the resolution announced respecting the Scheldt was considered as proof of an intention to proceed to a rupture with Holland; that a rupture with Holland on this ground or any other injurious to their rights, must also lead to an immediate rupture with this country; and that altho' we should deeply regret the event and were really desirous of preserving, if possible, the neutrality to which we had hitherto adhered, we were fully determined, if the case arose, to give our utmost support to our ally.
>
> His answer was that he hoped nothing of the sort would happen; that he believed there was no design of proceeding to hostilities against Holland; and that it was much the wish of the French Government to be on good terms with this country; that they wished to *ménager l'Angleterre*, and therefore to *ménager l'Hollande*; that these were the sentiments of M. le Brun when he left Paris about 3 weeks ago; that he believed them to be those of M. Dumouriez; and that, from the despatches of M. Chauvelin, which he had seen while here, he believed they continued to be those of the *Conseil Exécutif*; that he thought a confidential explanation on this subject very desirable; and would either

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[1] Ernouf, "Maret," 90.

> go to Paris or write to M. le Brun, to state what had passed in our conversation, and that he was persuaded they would be disposed to [send?] some other person here to enter privately into negotiations upon it. He afterwards dropped an idea that some difficulty might perhaps arise from the *Conseil Exécutif* feeling itself pressed by the weight of public opinion to propose to us to receive some person here in a formal character. To this I observed that the circumstances would by no means admit of any formal communication, and that they would certainly see the necessity of avoiding the difficulties which must arise from such a proposal, if they were sincere in wishing an explanation with a view to remove obstacles.
>
> Towards the end of the conversation, on his repeating his belief that it would be the wish of the French Government to have such an explanation and to remove, if possible, the grounds of misunderstanding, I remarked to him that, if this was really desired, there was another point which must be attended to—that he must have seen the impression made here by the decree in France avowing a design of endeavouring to extend their principles of government by raising disturbances in other countries; that, while this was professed or attempted, and till we had full security on this point, no explanation could answer its purpose, and that such a conduct must be considered as an act of hostility to neutral nations. He answered that he knew the impression which this circumstance produced, and had seen the decree I mentioned with consternation; that he believed it passed only in a moment of fermentation and went beyond what was intended; that it could be meant only against nations at war, and was considered as one way of carrying on war against them; that he believed it was not conformable to the sentiments of the *Conseil Exécutif*, and that they might possibly find means to revise it. To this I said that, whatever were the sentiments of the *Conseil Exécutif*, the decree, as it stood, might justly be considered by any neutral nation as an act of hostility. He concluded by saying that he would immediately send to M. le Brun an account of what had passed, which he hoped might lead to happy consequences.

Maret prefaced his report of this interview by assuring Lebrun that Pitt was decidedly in favour of peace, and in fact dreaded war more than the Whig aristocrats; but, he added, Lord Hawkesbury and the majority of Ministers were for war—a somewhat doubtful statement. Maret's description of the interview is graphic but far from complete. He reported Pitt's gracious effort to minimize the difficulties of form arising from the lapse of official relations between France and England. But (he wrote) the Minister's brow darkened at the mention of the names of Noël and Chauvelin; and he finally suggested that Maret should be the accredited French agent at London.[1]

Pitt's account does not name these personal details, and it lays more stress on the difficulties caused by the French decrees opening the Scheldt and offering help to malcontents. We must further remember that Maret's words of warning to his compatriots on the latter subject were suppressed in the version published at Paris, which therefore gave the impression that Pitt was not deeply moved by recent events. This *suppressio veri* partly accounts for the persistence of the French deputies in their resolves, which prevented the friendly explanations undoubtedly desired by Pitt and Maret.

Bad news also came in from The Hague, to the effect that the French were demanding a passage through the Dutch fortress of Maestricht. These tidings caused the worst impression. Grenville wrote in reply to Auckland on 4th December. "The conduct of the French in all their late proceedings appears to His Majesty's servants to indicate a fixed and settled design of hostility against this country and the [Dutch] Republic." Equally threatening were "their almost undisguised attempts now making to excite insurrection here and in Holland." Consequently His Majesty had decided to arm in self defence, and he hoped that the Dutch would firmly repel all attempts derogatory to their neutrality. The King (he added), while taking these precautionary measures, would not omit such steps as might lead to friendly explanations with France through the private agents of that Government; but no ambassador would be received.[2] Pitt and Grenville set little store by the soothing explanations of Dumouriez and his friend, Maulde, who had made overtures to Auckland which met with a guarded but not unfavourable response. On their renewal, Auckland received them coldly, remarking that the whole situation was changed by the late violent decrees of the French Convention. At that time, too, the friendly Maulde was recalled and replaced by Tainville, "a professed Jacobin with brutal manners and evident indiscretion."[3] Thus faded away the last faint hopes in that quarter.

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[1] "Ann. Reg." (1792), 190-3; Ernouf, "Maret," 94-8.

[2] "F. O.," Holland, 41; B.M. Add. MSS., 34446. Grenville to Auckland, 4th December.

[3] "F. O.," Holland, 42. Auckland to Grenville, 7th and 8th December 792. See, too, Miles, "Correspondence," i, 382; Sorel, iii, 224.

Equally sombre was the outlook at Paris. The pacific reports sent by Maret and Maulde from London and The Hague were before the French Ministers at their meeting on 5th December. They had also the benefit of a lucid and suggestive *Mémoire* sent by Talleyrand from London a week earlier, setting forth the desirability of a friendly understanding between the two free peoples, who, advancing hand in hand, might give liberty to backward peoples (especially Spanish America), and draw thence boundless benefits. It was the plan which Dumouriez and he had drawn up in the spring of that year. Probably the Executive Council took no notice of it; for certain papers found in the iron chest at the Tuileries cast doubts on the purity of Talleyrand's patriotism. Further, as Pache, Minister at War, hated Dumouriez, personal bias told strongly against the moderate proposals coming from London and The Hague. Nevertheless the Executive Council now decided to defer for the present the invasion of Holland, meanwhile chasing the Austrians beyond the Rhine, and fortifying Antwerp. The last step was declared not to infringe the principles of the Republic, "which oppose the spirit of conquest."

Obviously there was nothing to prevent the same liberal adaptation of these principles to Belgium as Grégoire had proposed for the welfare of the Savoyards. A few deputations of the liberated people, asking for union with France, would enable some equally skilful dialectician to discover that Belgium was naturally a part of the Republic. For the present, however, the Belgians sent a deputation to demand unconditional independence; and it taxed the ingenuity even of Barrère, then President of the Convention, to waive aside that request, with airy phrases as to the alliance of the two peoples emanating from the hands of Nature herself (4th December).[1]

Pitt cannot have heard of the French Cabinet's decision of 5th December, but he must have read of the ambiguous treatment of the Belgians at the bar of the Convention the day previously. It had long been a maxim at Whitehall that the Pays Bas must never go to France. To prevent such a disaster England had poured forth blood and treasure for more than a century. Pitt's resolve two years before, to maintain Austrian authority in those provinces, had deeply offended Prussia. Now he and Grenville turned to the Court of Vienna, and on 7th December made friendly overtures to Stadion, Austrian ambassador at London.[1] Thus, the French menace ended the long period of estrangement between Great Britain and Austria, though, as will duly appear, mutual confidence took root very slowly.

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[1] Sorel, iii, 204, 224.

On 9th December Lebrun sent off an important despatch to Chauvelin. With respect to the decree of 19th November, it stated that France would never demean herself by assisting rioters, but would respond to the "general will" of a people that desired to break its chains. Further, France could not reverse her decision concerning the Scheldt. She would not revolutionize Holland, but she expected Great Britain not to intervene in support of a constitution which the Dutch considered "vicious and destructive of their interests." Finally, the French Government could not recognize the guarantees of the Dutch constitution undertaken by England and Prussia in 1788.[2] On the same day Lebrun sent a message to Maret, who was still in London, adverting in ironical terms to the military preparations in England, at which the French would feel no alarm, and insinuating that the doctrines of liberty were making rapid progress there. As to negotiations, the only bases on which they could proceed were the recognition of the Republic, and the refusal of the French Cabinet to treat except by a fully accredited envoy.

On receipt of this letter on the 14th, Maret at once showed it to Miles, who urged him to request an immediate interview with the Prime Minister. This was accorded, and at 8 p.m. of that day, Maret met Pitt again. I have found no account of this interview. All we know is that it was short and depressing. Maret had to impart the unwelcome news that all the communications to the French Government must pass through the hands of Chauvelin—a personal triumph for that envoy. Pitt on his side declined to give any answer on the subject of Maret's communication, or on that of receiving Chauvelin.[3] We can imagine that under that stiff and cold exterior the Prime Minister concealed deep agitation; for the determination of the French rigidly to adhere to their decrees, to force Chauvelin upon the British Government, and to require the recognition of the French Republic, meant war.

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[1] Viveriot, ii, 393.

[2] Sorel, iii, 225, 226.

[3] Miles, "Corresp.," i, 388, 389.

CHAPTER IV

THE RUPTURE WITH FRANCE

La guerre aux rois était la conséquence naturelle du procès fait au roi de France; la propagande conquérante devait être liée au régicide.—SOREL.

THE opening of Parliament on 13th December 1792 took place amidst circumstances that were depressing to friends of peace. Affairs were gyrating in a vicious circle. Diplomacy, as we have seen, had come to a deadlock; but more threatening even than the dispute between Pitt and Lebrun were the rising passions of the two peoples. The republican ferment at Paris had worked all the more strongly since 20th November, the date of the discovery of the iron chest containing proofs of the anti-national intrigues of the King and Queen. Hence the decree (3rd December) for the trial of Louis XVI at the bar of the Convention with its inevitable sequel, the heating of royalist passion in all neighbouring lands. It is one of the many mishaps of the revolutionary movement that its enthusiasm finally aroused an opposite enthusiasm, its fury begot fury, and thus set in a series of cyclones which scarcely spent their force even at Waterloo.

An essentially philosophic movement at the outset, the French Revolution was now guided by demagogues and adventurers, whose only hope of keeping erect lay in constant and convulsive efforts forwards. Worst symptom of all, its armies already bade fair to play the part of the Praetorians of the later Roman Empire. Nothing is more singular at this time than the fear of the troops. Amidst the distress prevalent at Paris, much apprehension was felt at the return of the armies of Custine and Dumouriez. In part, of course, this uneasiness arose from a suspicion that these men, especially the latter, might take up the *rôle* of Monk and save Louis. But a member of the French Convention assured Miles that the disbanding of those tumultuary forces would bring on a social crisis.

> War, [he wrote on 9th December] is to a certain extent inevitable, not so much for the purpose of opening the Scheldt, for that is rather a pretext in order to animate the people and preserve their enthusiasm, but to get rid of 300,000 armed vagabonds, who can never be allowed to return without evident risk to the Convention and Executive Council. . . It is her opinion [Madame Roland's] and mine that we cannot make peace with the Emperor without danger to the Republic, and that it would be hazardous to recall an army, flushed with victory and impatient to gather fresh laurels, into the heart of a country whose commerce and manufactures have lost their activity, and which would eave the disbanded multitude without resources or employment.[1]

These words are noteworthy; for they show that prudential or party motives led some at least of the Girondins, formerly friends of England, to desire an extension of the war.

In England, too, the war spirit was rising. The traditional loyalty of the land had been strengthened by the tactful behaviour of George III since Pitt's accession to power. These feelings warmed to a steady glow at the time of the King's illness in 1788-9; and now the trial of Louis XVI, albeit on grounds which Britons could not understand, seemed an act of contemptible cruelty. To bring Louis from Versailles to Paris, to load him with indignities at the Tuileries, to stop his despairing bolt for freedom, to compass his downfall, to attack him in his palace and massacre his defenders, to depose him, and now to try him for his life for the crime of helping on his would-be deliverers, appeared to a nation of sportsmen a series of odious outrages on the laws of fair play. The action of certain Radical Clubs in sending addresses of congratulation to the National Convention also aroused deep disgust; and (as Bland Burges wrote to Auckland on 18th December) Loyal Associations sprang up on all sides.[2] A typical address was sent by the Dover Association to Pitt, as Lord Warden, on 19th December, asking for permission to take arms in defence of King and Constitution against invaders from without or levellers within.[3] The example was widely followed; and thus, as usually happens in this land, the puny preparations of Government were helped on by the eager exertions of the people.

The revulsion in public opinion early in December was so marked as to impress even Chauvelin. He warned Lebrun that within a month the English had so changed as scarcely to be recognizable; but he added: "Pitt seems to have killed public opinion in England." A conversation which Sheridan had with him on 7th December ought to have disproved this fable. The Whig orator sternly reprobated the French decree of 19th November, offering aid to malcontents, and stated that the Opposition desired peace with France, but not if she attacked Holland. Nine-tenths of the people would resent any attempt to interfere with England or her Allies.

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[1] Miles, "Corresp.," i, 385-7.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 34446.

[3] Pitt MSS., 245. Published in "Napoleon and the Invasion of England," by H. E. Wheeler and A. M. Broadley, ii, App.

This patriotic utterance of Sheridan expressed the feelings of a large part of the Whig Opposition. Parliament on 13th December showed marked approval of the King's Speech, which, while affirming his peaceful intentions, asserted his resolve to strengthen the forces. Lansdowne and Stanhope struck a few jarring notes; but in the Commons the Opposition was almost paralysed by a split between the New and Old Whigs. At a meeting of the party, held on 11th December at Burlington House, the majority decided to support the Government. Indeed Parliament would probably have presented a united front but for the action of Lansdowne, Stanhope, and Fox. Much depended on the conduct of the great orator at this crisis. A warning uttered by him to French Republicans might have had the most salutary effect. Unfortunately his conduct was such as to impair the unity of English sentiment and thereby to encourage the delusions of the men in power at Paris. In the meeting on 11th December he asserted that there was no fear of a revolt (in which he was doubtless correct) and that the calling out of the Militia was a mere trick, which he would strenuously oppose. He admitted that we must support the Dutch if they were attacked, and disapproved of the French decree respecting the Scheldt, but strongly deprecated war on that account. On the 12th he threw caution to the winds, and stated with an oath that there was no address that Pitt could frame on which he would not propose an amendment and divide the House.[1] This is party spirit run mad; but it was in that spirit that Fox went to the House on the 13th.

There he made one of his finest flights of oratory. None of his speeches excels it in beauty of diction and matchless energy of thought. Most forcible was the passage in which he derided the ministerial maxim that the canon of English laws and liberties was complete; that we might thenceforth stand still, and call upon a wondering world to admire it as a model of human perfection. Even more biting were his taunts at Ministers for seeking to stamp out the discontent which their injustice and violence had created.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 475.

> You have gone upon the principles of slavery in all your proceedings; you neglect in your conduct the foundation of all legitimate government, the rights of the people; and, setting up this bugbear, you spread a panic for the very purpose of sanctifying this infringement, while again the very infringement engenders the evil which you dread. One extreme naturally leads to another. Those who dread republicanism fly for shelter to the Crown. Those who desire Reform and are calumniated are driven by despair to republicanism. And this is the evil that I dread. These are the extremes into which these violent agitations hurry the people, to the decrease of that middle order of men who shudder as much at republicanism on the one hand as they do at despotism on the other.[1]

He then taunted Ministers with abandoning Poland and not opposing the coalition of Austria and Prussia, and asserted that the Cabinet refused to negotiate with France because she was a Republic, and her Ministers had not been anointed with the holy oil of Rheims. The weakest part of the speech was that which dealt with the existing crisis. For of what use was it to point out where Ministers had gone astray months and years before, if he did not now mark out for them a practicable course? In truth, though the prince of debaters, Fox lacked self-restraint, balance of judgement, and practical sagacity. The sole important issue was the encouraging of the peace party at Paris, with a view to the revocation of the aggressive decrees of the Convention. In private, Fox had admitted that they were wholly indefensible; and yet, in order to snatch an oratorical triumph, he fired off a diatribe which could not but stiffen the necks of the French Jacobins. At such a crisis the true statesman merges the partisan in the patriot and says not a word to weaken his own Government and hearten its opponents. To this height of self-denial Fox rarely rose; and the judgement alike of his fellows and of posterity has pronounced this speech a masterpiece of partisan invective and of political fatuity.

[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxx, 19-21.

For how was it possible to recognize the French Republic until it had withdrawn its threats to existing Governments? Pitt had reason to believe that a firm protest against the aggressive decrees of November was the only means of averting an overturn of international law. He took the proper means of protesting against them, and his protest was disregarded. In such a case, to recognize a revolutionary Government which had just proclaimed its sympathy with malcontents and its resolve to dictate terms to our Dutch allies, would have been a sign of weakness. There was but one chance of peace, namely, that Parliament should give so overwhelming a support to Pitt and Grenville as to convince the tyros at Paris that they had to do, not with a clique, but a nation. This unanimity the efforts of Fox impaired. Some of his friends voted with him from a sense of personal regard; but the greater number passed over to the Government or did not vote. Consequently the Foxites mustered 50 votes against 290.

Equally inopportune was his motion of 15th December, for sending a Minister to Paris to treat with that Government. His knowledge of all that went on at the French Embassy in Portman Square was so exact (witness his repetition publicly on the 13th of the very words of one of Lebrun's despatches to Chauvelin),[1] that he must have known of the informal communications between Pitt and Maret, and of the arrival on the 14th of despatches from Paris, which negatived the requests of the Prime Minister. Doubtless it was this last circumstance which curtailed and weakened Fox's second speech. Grey, Erskine, and Whitbread vigorously supported the motion; but there was a general feeling that the despatch of an ambassador to Paris would be a weak acquiescence in the French claims. The motion was therefore negatived. Pitt was not present at these first debates, not having yet been re-elected by the University of Cambridge after his recent acceptance of the Lord Wardenship of the Cinque Ports. The defence of the Government therefore devolved chiefly upon Dundas, Windham, and Burke—a significant conjunction of names. On 16th December Burke for the first time took his seat on the Treasury Bench.

A national party might now have been formed but for the inaction of the Duke of Portland. During the meetings at his mansion, Burlington House, he evinced strong disapproval of the views of Fox; and, as official leader of the Whigs, he had it in his power to bring nearly the whole of the party over to the Government side. From this course, which would have placed country above party, the Duke shrank; and his followers were left to sort themselves at will. There was a general expectation that Portland would publicly declare against Fox; but friendship or timidity held him tongue-tied. Malmesbury sought to waken him from his "trance," but in vain.[1] He lay under "the wand of the magician" (Pitt's phrase for the witchery that Fox exerted), even when so staunch a Whig as Sir Gilbert Elliot saw that the wizard's enchantments were working infinite mischief.[2]

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[1] Miles ("Corresp.," i, 391), who also asserts that Sheridan echoed words used by the French agent, Noël.

Owing to the wrong-headedness of Fox and the timidity of Portland, Pitt's triumph in the Commons was not decisive enough to tear the veil away from the eyes of the French Jacobins. Nothing short of unanimity at Westminster could have worked that miracle. Surely not even that novice in diplomacy, Lebrun, would have threatened to appeal from the British Government to the British nation, had he not believed the Government to be without support.

This delusion partly accounts for the memorable decree of 15th December. The French Convention thereby asserts its resolve to revolutionize all countries where its armies are or shall come. It will recognize no institutions alien to the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. All feudal dues, customs, and privileges are to be annulled, and the liberated people will meet in primary assemblies to organize an Administration. Arrangements will be made for defraying the expenses of the liberating army, and for maintaining it while it remains.[3] Finally France declares that she will treat as an enemy the people which refuses to accept Liberty and Equality, and tolerates its prince and privileged castes. The decree is at once followed by a proclamation drawn up for the benefit of the subject peoples whom it may concern. Finally, the Convention decides that the course of rivers must everywhere be free, and directs its generals to enforce that principle with respect to the Scheldt.

In view of this stern reiteration of the right to overturn all

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 478-81.

[2] "Life and Letters of Earl Minto," ii, 82.

[3] Chuquet, "Jemappes," 196-7, shows that the urgent needs of the army in Belgium were the *raison d'être* of the decree.

Governments that conflict with revolutionary principles, it is impossible to consider the decree of 19th November, offering assistance to malcontent peoples, as a meaningless display of emotion. Subsequent events threw a sinister light on it. The annexation of Savoy on 27th November was not a convincing proof of altruism; and the refusal of the Executive Council, on 8th and 9th December, to reconsider its decision on the Scheldt, marked a firm resolve to carry out French policy in the Pays Bas, even if it led to war with England. Now there came, as a damning corollary, the decree of 15th December, which flung defiance at all Governments of the old type. Like Mohammed, Lebrun stood forth with the "Contrat Social" in one hand, the sword in the other, and bade the world take its choice.

For England there could be no doubt. Pitt and Grenville had decided that the only chance of peace lay in offering a firm front to every act of aggression. In this they had general support. Fox might choose to distort facts by declaring that Ministers were about to plunge the country into war on a matter of form[1] (the refusal to treat officially with the French Republic); but everyone knew that the first aggressive action was that of France, directed against the Anglo-Dutch alliance. The firmness of Ministers gained them support in unexpected quarters. On 20th December, when they asked for a vote for 25,000 seamen, including 5,000 marines, Sheridan heartily declared that he would have supported a vote for 40,000 seamen if that number had been deemed necessary. He also made a suggestion that the British Parliament or people should appeal to the generous instincts of Frenchmen to spare the life of Louis XVI. The proposal came somewhat oddly in a debate for increasing our forces against France; and it brought up Burke in one of his most acrid moods. Such an appeal, he said, was futile, for Louis was in the custody of assassins who were both accusers and judges: his death was inevitable. Sheridan and Fox heartily reprobated this recklessly vindictive language.

Pitt then pointed out that on 17th August George III had expressed an earnest desire for the safety of Louis and the Royal Family of France in terms which were then read out. The same was the desire of every Briton; and the sentiments now expressed in that House would be heard and noted at Paris. If any more formal measure were to be adopted, he suggested the entering a protest in the Journals of the House; but any public representation, he said, must be couched in terms of indignation which must tend to defeat its own object. With this method of procedure Fox and Sheridan expressed their entire concurrence.[1] It is therefore a malicious falsehood to say that Pitt opposed their suggestion.[2] Burke certainly did so, and in the worst possible taste; but Pitt carried it out so far as was deemed desirable. If Sheridan and Fox wished for a public appeal, it was for them to set it on foot.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 359-62; "Parl. Hist.," xxx, 126.

I must here notice the vague and misleading statements in Godoy's Memoirs (written a generation later) that Spain made strenuous efforts to save the life of Louis XVI and opened "an unlimited credit" at Paris with the view of bribing members of the Convention to secure his acquittal. Further, that he, Godoy, secretly approached Pitt in order to secure his financial aid, which that statesman obstinately refused.[3] The story does not hang well together; for if Spain had already opened an unlimited credit at Paris, why did she want pecuniary help from Pitt? Further, the opening of unlimited credit, presumably with a Parisian bank, did not consort well with the secret methods which were essential to the success of the plan.

In order to probe this matter to the bottom, I have examined the British Foreign Office archives relating to Spain for the months of December and January. They are detailed and apparently complete. F. J. Jackson, our *chargé d'affaires* at Madrid, wrote to Lord Grenville every three or four days, as the relations of the two States had been far from cordial owing to friction caused by the cession of Nootka Sound, Captain Vancouver having been employed to settle the boundaries and fix a neutral zone between the two Empires. Grenville also wrote three times to Jackson to express his apprehension that the timidity and poverty of Spain would cause her to yield to the French Republic in the matter of some demonstrations on the frontier. But there is no word implying that Spain requested help from England, either pecuniary or diplomatic, in order to save Louis. Early in January Charles IV made such an appeal to the French Convention, but it was treated with contemptuous indifference. At that time the Courts of London and Madrid were beginning to draw closer together in order to withstand the demands of France; but nothing passed between them officially respecting the saving of Louis. Now, where the life of a King was at stake, any communication must have been official, and if it were made through the Spanish ambassador in London, Grenville would certainly have referred to it in his despatches to Madrid.[1] We may therefore dismiss Godoy's story as a cruel and baseless slander, due to the spiteful desire of a discredited politician to drag down a great name nearer to his own level.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxx, 137-46.

[2] "Mems. tirés des Papiers d'un homme d'Etat," ii, 100. This false assertion was adopted by Malouet ("Méms.," ii, 201), whence it has been copied largely, without examination of the debate itself.

[3] Godoy, "Mems.," i, ch. vi.

It is also worth noting that Malouet, who was then in close touch with Grenville on San Domingo affairs, does not mention in his Memoirs any attempt to involve the Cabinet in a scheme for bribing the Convention—an action which the French exiles in England and Holland were perfectly able to carry out themselves had they been so minded. The only document bearing on this question is a Memorial drawn up on 7th December by Malouet, Lally-Tollendal, and Gillier, stating their horror at the King's trial, and their belief that his life might be spared if George III and the British Government issued a Declaration stating their lively interest in Louis XVI and his family, their resolve for ever to refuse an asylum to all regicides, and to cut off all supplies of food from France if the crime were committed.[2] The Memorial was probably presented to Lord Grenville; but its inutility, or danger, in the proud and exacting mood then prevalent at Paris, is obvious. The confidential reports sent by "M. S." from Paris to Lord Grenville do not refer to any such overture to the Cabinet.[3]

Lastly, there is the curious fact that the ex-abbé Noël, one of Chauvelin's "advisers," came to Miles late on 18th December, and affected much concern at the prospect of the execution of Louis. He then suggested that Pitt should confer with a M. Talon, residing in Sloane Street, who had immense resources and stood well with all parties in France, in order to devise some means for saving the life of that monarch. When Miles asked Noël how Pitt was to assist in this laudable project, no answer was forthcoming. We must commend Noël's prudence; for he had already stated that Talon was under impeachment in France. How a man accused of treason could help his King, save by secretly using some of his immense resources to bribe the deputies, is no more apparent to us than it was to Miles. In fact he detected a snare in this effort to associate Pitt with a wealthy French exile in what must evidently be merely an affair of bribery. He therefore declined to bring the matter before Pitt, whereupon Noël betrayed signs of satisfaction at finding that the Minister really was neutral on French internal affairs.[1] This little episode should open the eyes of detractors of Pitt to the extraordinary difficulty of his position. Of one thing we may be certain. The readiest way of assuring the doom of the hapless monarch was to take up some one of the silly or guileful schemes then mooted for pressing the British Government to take sides in the trial. Pitt's rigorous neutrality was the best means of helping the advocates of Louis in their uphill fight with the hostile Convention.

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[1] "F. O.," Spain," 25, 26.

[2] "F. O.," France, 40.

[3] "F. O.," France, 40, 41.

Reverting to events at Westminster, we note that Ministers, on 21st December, introduced into the Upper House an Aliens Bill for subjecting to supervision the many thousands of foreigners who had flocked to these shores. The debates on this measure showed some approach to unanimity, though Lansdowne and Lauderdale in the Lords, and Fox in the Commons opposed it as a breach of the hospitable traditions of this land. On the 28th Burke spoke in its support with his usual passion, flinging down a Birmingham dagger as a sign of the French fraternity now introduced into these happy islands.[1] After a few alterations in committee, the Bill passed on the last day of the year.

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[1] Miles, "Corresp.," i, 398-400. Unfortunately, Lord Acton ("Lects. on the French Rev.," 253) accepted the stories against Pitt. He states that Danton secretly offered to save Louis for £40,000; that Lansdowne, Sheridan, and Fox urged Pitt to interpose; and that Pitt informed Maret that he did not do so because the execution of Louis would ruin the Whigs. I must reply that Lord Fitzmaurice assures me there is no sign that the first Lord Lansdowne urged Pitt to bribe the Convention, though in the debate of 21st December 1792 he suggested the sending an ambassador to Paris to improve the relations of the two lands, and assuage the hostility to Louis. Further, Danton could scarcely have made that offer; for he left Paris for Belgium on 1st December, and did not return till 14th January, after which he was engrossed in the last illness of his wife. Danton's name was dragged into the affair probably by mistake for Dannon (see Belloc, "Danton," 200). Lastly, as Maret left London on 19th December, and did not return until 30th January, he did not see Pitt at the crucial time of the trial. And would Pitt have made so damaging a remark to a Frenchman? Is it not obviously a Whig slander?

Meanwhile, on 18th December, Lebrun had sent to the Convention a report on the negotiations, which was not adapted to soften the passions of the time, being merely a piece of parliamentary declamation; but, as declamation rather than reason held sway at Paris, some of its phrases must be quoted. After citing with approval passages from the recent speech of Fox, Lebrun referred to the eager interest taken by the British nation in the triumphs of the French arms. "But," he continued, "these glorious events have a quite contrary effect upon the English Minister. In a moment, the dread and jealousy of our victories, the entreaties of cowardly rebels [the French *émigrés*], the vile intrigues of hostile Courts, and the secret suspicions that the numerous addresses from all parts of England excited, determined him to more decisive military preparations and to an immediate assembling of Parliament." Lebrun then accused Pitt of seeking to stir up public opinion against France, and of exciting, "by the most corrupt means, distrusts, doubts, and disorders." A still more extraordinary charge followed, namely, that Pitt and Grenville, while refusing to acknowledge the French diplomatic agents, had "requested to see them confidentially, to hold communications with them, and to grant them secret conferences."[2] Lebrun then referred in contemptuous terms to the British naval preparations, and stated that he had firmly maintained the decree respecting the Scheldt. He then affirmed the reasonableness of the decree of 19th November; and scouted the notion that France harboured designs against Holland. In answer to this last he had said in effect: "That it was much to be wished that the British Ministry had never meddled more with the internal government of that Republic than we ourselves wish to meddle." Finally, if these disputes led to a rupture, "the war will be only the war of the British Minister against us; and we will not fail to make a solemn appeal to the English nation." . . . "In short, we will leave it to the English nation to judge between us, and the issue of this contest may lead to consequences which he [Pitt] did not expect."

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxx, 189. See ch. iii of this work.

[2] See p. 64 for a refutation of this.

In the sordid annals of party strife this report of Lebrun holds a high place. In order to furbish up the dulled prestige of the Gironde he sought to excite national animosity, and to revive the former hatred of the name of Pitt. What could be more criminal than to sneer at the smallness of England's naval preparations? What more false than to charge Pitt and Grenville with secretly begging for interviews with agents whom outwardly they scorned? It is by acts like these that nations are set by the ears; and generally they are at one another's throats before the lie can be exposed. Lebrun's report was received with loud applause. No one questioned the accuracy of its details; and these blind followers of a blind guide unanimously voted that it should be printed and widely circulated. On 20th December Lebrun sent a copy of it to Chauvelin, along with instructions which lost none of their emphasis in the note drawn up at Portman Square. He forwarded another copy of the report to Noël, with this significant explanation: "This document will keep you in touch with the ideas of this country and will show you that I scarcely have this affair in my hands any longer."[1]

This admission is illuminating. The trial of Louis XVI had, as the men of the Mountain foresaw, placed the Girondin Ministry and its followers in a most embarrassing position. Many of them inclined to mercy or to compromises which found little favour with the populace. Accordingly, the procedure at the trial, as also the final verdict, turned largely on the desperate efforts of the Jacobins to discredit their rivals, who sought by all means to keep their foothold in the revolutionary torrent. One of the most obvious devices was to represent the Executive Council as the champion of ultra-democratic ideas as against envious and reactionary England. If this notion gained currency, Lebrun and his colleagues might hope still to ride on the crest of the wave.

Historical students will remember another occasion when a tottering Ministry sought to keep pace with public opinion at Paris. The Duc de Gramont on 12th July 1870 instructed the French ambassador, Benedetti, to insist on obtaining from King William of Prussia an immediate answer to a demand that was certain to arouse angry feelings; and he sent to Benedetti the explanation that public opinion was *outflanking* the Ministry, and that "the effervescence of spirits is such that we do not know whether we shall succeed in mastering it." Thus, twice within eighty years France was hurried towards the brink of the precipice because her Foreign Minister could not control an effervescence of spirits which he himself had helped to excite.

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[1] Sorel, iii, 241. So, too, Gouverneur Morris, then in Paris, thought the French Ministers, despite their bluster, wished to avoid war "if the people will let them." (Quoted by Lecky, vi, 114.)

Lebrun's missives of 20th December bore fruit seven days later in Chauvelin's despatch to Grenville. As this document has often been printed, only a brief summary need be given here. The French envoy insisted that the conduct of France towards England had throughout been correct and conciliatory; but the Executive Council had long observed with concern the unfriendliness of the British Ministers, and now pressed its envoy to demand definitely whether they held the position of a neutral or an enemy. The only possible cause of enmity could be a misinterpretation of the decree of 19th November, which obviously applied merely to peoples that demanded the fraternal aid of Frenchmen. As France wished to respect the independence of England and her allies, she would not attack the Dutch. The opening of the Scheldt, however, was a question decided irrevocably by reason and justice, besides being a matter of small moment; and the British Ministers could not venture to make it a cause of war. If they did, they would not be supported by the British people. Chauvelin then demanded an official reply, and expressed the hope that the British Cabinet would not engage in a war for which it alone would be responsible and to which the people would not accord its support.[1]

What Pitt and Grenville thought of Chauvelin's last effort on behalf of peace will best appear in Grenville's despatch of 28th December to Auckland at The Hague:

> The tone and language of Chauvelin's note of the 27th appear calculated to accelerate a rupture, and the same conclusion seems to follow from the circumstance of M. Maret's having informed Mr. Pitt that it was not intended by the *Conseil Exécutif* to charge any private agent with any commission of the nature which he had himself suggested in his first conference. I have some reason to believe that it is now intended to bring forward immediately in Holland the same question of receiving formal and official communication from the *Conseil Exécutif.* I trust that the answer will be conformable to opinions entertained here;

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxx, 250-3; "Ann. Reg." (1793), 114-16.

and, with the view of avoiding as far as possible, any difference, however slight, in the expression of our sentiments, I shall lose no time in sending to Your Excellency the copy of the answer to M. Chauvelin when it is settled.

I cannot conclude this dispatch without again urging Your Excellency to press in the strongest manner possible upon the Dutch Ministers the necessity of immediately bringing forward their whole force. It is evident that the present intentions of France are those of aggression. Whichever of the Allies is first attacked, there can be no doubt under the present circumstances, but that they must make common cause in order to render the calamity of war short, if it is unavoidable. And if the state of the preparations of the Republic is found inadequate to the emergency, the attack will certainly be first made there where least resistance is expected. Every circumstance therefore, of interest and dignity require [*sic*] that no exertion of which the Republic can be made capable, should be spared at such a moment as the present.[1]

Evidently Grenville looked on Chauvelin's note as an ultimatum; and it is noteworthy that Pitt on 28th December refused to see Chauvelin. Our Dutch Allies, however, were by no means ready. The separate Admiralties of the Dutch Provinces had not enough men to equip, still less to man, their ships; and almost their only defence lay in a British squadron which set sail for Flushing on or about 29th December.[2]

For the present, then, Pitt and Grenville contented themselves with sending a stiff rejoinder to Chauvelin's note. Grenville reminded him that he had no official character in this country since the fall of the French monarchy, and that the sinister meaning of the decree of 19th November, as shown in the public reception given at Paris to the promoters of sedition in this country, was in no wise cleared away by his recent declaration, which still claimed the right to encourage disloyalty. With regard to the Scheldt question, Grenville declared again that it was of the highest importance both in point of fact and of principle; of fact, because the action of France pre-supposed her sovereignty of the Low Countries; of principle, because, if passed over, it would give her the right to abrogate treaties at her will. The desire of England to preserve strict neutrality in French affairs was universally acknowledged, and he (Chauvelin) had not urged a single circumstance in disproof of it. But, England (continued Grenville) "will never see with indifference that

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34446.

[2] *Ibid.*, and "Dropmore P.," ii, 361.

France shall make herself, either directly or indirectly, sovereign of the Low Countries, or general arbitress of the rights and liberties of Europe. If France is really desirous of maintaining friendship and peace with England, she must show herself disposed to renounce her views of aggression and aggrandisement and to confine herself within her own territory, without insulting other Governments, without disturbing their tranquillity, without violating their rights"[1] (December 31).

This stern rebuke to the flippant claim of the French Ministers to settle the affairs of neighbouring States in accord with their own principles has often been ascribed to Pitt himself. This is doubtful. I can find no proof that he intervened directly in the affairs of the Foreign Office after the accession of Grenville, as he had done in the days of the Duke of Leeds. Perhaps the austere personality of Grenville forbade any intervention; or it may be that the two cousins were in so complete an agreement on principles that Pitt left all details to the Foreign Minister. Certain it is that he himself remained almost passive at this time; and all the acts were the acts of Grenville. It was well known that the two men were in close touch. "I consider his lordship the same as Mr. Pitt," wrote Miles to Aust.[2]

More important is the question—What were the aims of the British Government for the settlement of Europe? Fortunately, we are able to answer this without a shadow of doubt. For on 29th December Grenville sent off a despatch to Whitworth at St. Petersburg referring to an effusive offer of alliance from Catharine II. Through Vorontzoff, her envoy at London, she expressed her admiration of the generous conduct of George III, and her earnest desire to help him in restoring order to Europe by means of a concert of the Powers, which might be formed at London. At the same time she found means to instruct her partisans in the British Parliament to relax their efforts against the Ministry.[3] Pitt and Grenville were not dazzled by these proposals. The latter generously declared to Auckland that he did not believe the Opposition to be influenced by unpatriotic motives; and he doubted the sincerity of Catharine's offer.[4] Nevertheless, in view of the imminence of a French attack on Holland, Grenville decided to encourage the Czarina to form a league of the

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxx, 253-6; "Ann. Reg." (1793), 116-9.

[2] "Miles, "Corresp.," i, 351.

[3] "Dropmore P.," ii, 363.

[4] B.M. Add. MSS., 34446.

Powers; but the instructions which he sent on 29th December to Whitworth set forth aims very different from hers. He suggested that the Powers not yet at war should invite the French people to accept the following terms:

> The withdrawing of their arms within the limits of the French territory: the abandoning their conquests; the rescinding any acts injurious to the sovereignty or rights of any other nations; and the giving, in some public and unequivocal manner, a pledge of their intention no longer to foment troubles and to excite disturbances against their own Governments. In return for these stipulations the different Powers of Europe who should be parties to this measure might engage to abandon all measures or views of hostility against France or interference in their internal affairs, and to maintain a correspondence or intercourse of amity with the existing powers in that country with whom such a treaty may be concluded. [If, however, France refuses to give these pledges, then the Powers will take] active measures to obtain the ends in view, and it may be considered whether, in such a case, they might not reasonably look to some indemnity for the expenses and hazards to which they would necessarily be exposed.[1]

From this remarkable pronouncement it appears that Pitt and Grenville harboured no hostility to the French Republic as such, provided that it acted on the principles which it professed up to the end of October 1792. The ensuing acts of aggression and propagandism they unflinchingly opposed, but in the hope that the combined remonstrances of all the Powers would induce the French leaders to withdraw their untenable claims. Above all, the British Cabinet did not refuse eventually to recognize the new state of things at Paris, a point of view very far removed from the flaming royalism of Catharine II and Burke. Whether a concert of the Powers could have been formed on these moderate terms is very doubtful. What is certain is that Pitt and Grenville saw in it the chief hope of peace, and that they did not desire to force royalty on reluctant France. For them the war, if it came, was not a war of opinion—Monarchy *versus* Republic. It was a struggle to preserve the Balance of Power, which in all ages our statesmen had seen to be incompatible with the sovereignty of France in the Low Countries. That danger averted, they were content to let France settle her own affairs, if she behaved with the like tolerance towards her neighbours.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34446. Grenville to Whitworth, 29th December.

Unhappily, these pacific and enlightened views were not accompanied by conciliatory manners. It was the bane of Pitt, and still more of Grenville, that their innate reserve often cooled their friends and heated their opponents.[1] In the case of so vain and touchy a man as Chauvelin a little affability would have gone a long way; and this was especially desirable, as he had enough support at Paris to thwart the attempt to replace him by some envoy less disliked at St. James's. Nevertheless, they persisted in their resolve not to recognize him officially; and the Executive Council made it a point of honour to force him on the British Court. Personal questions therefore told against a peaceful settlement. Even at the end of the year 1792 it was not wholly impossible, provided that the questions in dispute were treated with open-mindedness and a desire to understand the point of view of the opponent.

Undoubtedly it was for the French Government to take the first steps towards reconciliation by retracting or toning down the decrees of 16th and 19th November and 15th December, which had brought about the crisis. Further, the Convention ought to have seen through and thwarted the attempt of Lebrun to regain popularity by insulting Pitt in the report of 18th December. Had that body been less intent on the party manœuvres centring in the trial of Louis XVI, it would assuredly not have furthered the insidious designs of that Minister. It might have offered to recall Chauvelin, and to substitute Maret, a man known to be a *persona grata* to Pitt. Finally, in view of the large concourse of Frenchmen now in London, reckoned at 15,000, the Executive Council would have done well to say nothing about the passing of the Aliens Bill, obviously a precautionary measure called for by the emergency.[2]

The French Ministers took exactly the contrary course. On 30th December they decided that Chauvelin should demand the withdrawal of that measure, as contrary to the treaty of 1786; failing this, France would declare that compact at an end. They also began to prepare for an invasion of England, on a plan which came before them on 28th December; and on the last day of the year, Monge, Minister for the Navy, issued a circular letter to Friends of Liberty and Equality in the seaports. It contained passages to the following effect:

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[1] Miles, "Corresp.," i, 441.

[2] *Ibid.*, i, 439.

> The English Government is arming, and the King of Spain, encouraged by this, is preparing to attack us. These two tyrannical Powers, after persecuting the patriots on their own territories, think no doubt that they will be able to influence the judgment to be pronounced on the traitor, Louis. They hope to frighten us; but no! a people which has made itself free, a people which has driven out of the bosom of France, and as far as the distant borders of the Rhine, the terrible army of the Prussians and Austrians—the people of France will not suffer laws to be dictated to them by any tyrant. The King and his Parliament mean to make war upon us. Will the English republicans suffer it? Already these free men show their discontent and the repugnance which they have to bear arms against their brothers, the French. Well! We will fly to their succour. We will make a descent in the island. We will lodge there 50,000 caps of Liberty. We will plant there the sacred tree, and we will stretch out our arms to our republican brethren. The tyranny of their Government will soon be destroyed.

What did the famous mathematician think of this effusion in the heyday of the Empire, when he became Count of Pelusium with a Westphalian estate bringing in 200,000 francs a year? A collection of the frank confessions of the *ci-devant* Jacobins would form an entertaining volume.

Not the least piquant of them would be the criticisms of a Breton captain, Kersaint, on the bellicose speech which he launched at the Convention on 1st January 1793. Admitting that Pitt really wanted peace, while Fox only desired to abase his rival, he averred that the Prime Minister would try to arrest France in her rapid career of land conquest either by a naval war or by an armed mediation. War, said Kersaint, must result, were it only from the perplexities of Pitt and the hatred of George III for the French Republic. France, then, must threaten to free the Scottish and Irish nations which England had so long oppressed. The Republic could appeal with telling effect to the English sailors not to fight against the champions of the Rights of Man. Further, France need not fear the British Empire; for it is vulnerable in every sea, on all the continental markets, while France stands four-square, rooted in her fertile soil. Let them, then, attack the sources of British wealth which are easily assailable. "The credit of England rests upon fictitious wealth, the real riches of that people are scattered everywhere. . . . Asia, Portugal and Spain are the best markets for English products. . . . We must attack Lisbon and the Brazils, and carry an auxiliary army to Tippoo Sultan." As for Spain (continued Kersaint) she could be paralysed by the revolutionizing of Spanish America—the suggestion of Miranda to Dumouriez. In fact, Frenchmen need not fear war with all Governments. Open enmity was better than neutrality. This war would "regulate the destiny of nations and found the liberty of the world." Accordingly he proposed to offer to England either war or an alliance; to equip thirty sail of the line and twenty-four frigates; and to form a Committee of General Defence. The Convention assented to this last and referred the other questions to it.

Thus opened the terrible year, 1793. The circular letter of Monge and the speech of Kersaint furnished the weather-gauge for the future. In them we detect the mental exaltation, the boundless daring, the overwrought conviction of their neighbours' weakness, which were to carry Frenchmen up to bewildering heights of glory and overwhelm them in final disaster. We behold in awful perspective the conquest of Holland, Italy, and Central Europe, the Irish Rebellion, the Egyptian Expedition, the war on British commerce, culminating in the Continental System, with its ensuing campaigns in Spain and Russia, and the downfall of Napoleon. All this and more can be seen dimly, as in a crystal globe, in that fateful phrase of Kersaint—"The credit of England rests upon fictitious wealth."

Turning to the last details that preceded the declaration of war, we notice that on 7th January Chauvelin, acting on the order of Lebrun, sent in a sharp protest against the Aliens Bill as an infraction of Pitt's Treaty of Commerce of 1786. On one count Chauvelin certainly had a right to complain; for, strange to say, the Act was put in operation against Talleyrand, nominally his adviser, and the champion of the Anglo-French *entente*. The ex-Bishop of Autun penned an eloquent protest, which apparently had some effect, for he was not expelled until March 1794.[1] Far more incisive was Chauvelin's complaint. We can imagine his feelings when Grenville curtly declined to receive it.[2] At the same time Grenville refused to discuss or explain the stoppage of certain cargoes of grain destined for French ports.

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[1] I published it in the "Eng. Hist. Rev." for April 1906; see, too, Fitzmaurice, "Shelburne," iii, 515. Bulwer Lytton, "Hist. Characters" (Talleyrand), wrongly states that he was at once expelled.

[2] "Ann. Reg.," 122-5; "Parl. Hist.," xxx, 259-61; Miles, "Corresp.," ii, 4.

His private correspondence with Auckland shows that this measure was due to the fear that the French would store the corn for the use of the army that was threatening Holland. That motive of course could not be disclosed to Chauvelin; and Grenville declined to explain it at all until the resolutions arrived at in Paris were clearly set forth.

On Sunday, 13th January, Chauvelin received from Lebrun a long despatch, drawn up in less provoking terms than the last. He sought an informal interview with Grenville, which was imdiately granted. Grenville's hitherto unpublished account of the interview may be quoted in full, as it enables us to see the *nuances* of the situation:

Jan. 13, 1793.[1]

M. Chauvelin as soon as he came into my room began by stating that he was desirous of explaining that all his steps subsequent to the date of my letter of Dec. 31 had been taken in consequence of positive instructions from the *Conseil Exécutif*, given before they had received that letter. That they had seen in that letter one thing which had been satisfactory to them, notwithstanding the other things of which they might complain—this was the assurance which enabled them to reject the idea entertained by some persons in France of its being the intention of the Government here to declare war at all events. Under this assurance they had authorized him to give to their answer a form which was not liable to the exceptions which had before been taken. He then gave me the despatch from M. Le Brun. When I had read it I told him only that the circumstances were too critical for me to say anything as to its contents except to refer him to the answer which I should be [*sic*] to give to it.

He then said that there was one other point which he was desirous of mentioning. That one of the difficulties of the present situation of the two Countries was the want of a proper channel of communication. That he himself, from having no access to the King's Ministers, was frequently unable to give accounts of their real views and intentions. That he was therefore to desire the permission to see me often *sous la même forme* that he had now come [*sic*].

I told him that this was a point on which I was unwilling to take upon myself personally to give him an answer; but that he should have one; and in order to avoid mistakes I repeated to him the phrase, that his request was to see me *sous la même forme*. He said "yes," and that this was conceived to be a means of arriving sooner at the object of his being allowed to present to the King the *lettres de créance* with which he was charged. As he did not express this quite distinctly, I asked him again whether I understood him right; that his present request was only to communicate under the form in which he now came. He again assented to this, but in doing it threw out that he had *almost* had direct orders from the *Conseil Exécutif* to apply for permission to present his letters. He however expressly assented to my statement that the other was at present his only request.

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[1] "F. O.," France, 41.

Nothing else material passed, except justifications of himself from the imputation of treating on public business with some persons in this country with whom he had connections of private friendship and intercourse, and complaints of the manner in which he was treated in the newspapers. To neither of these points I said anything.[1]

It is not surprising that Grenville asked for time to consult his colleagues (probably also the King) before returning an answer to Lebrun's missive; for, though unobjectionable in form, it re-affirmed the French claims and justified all the proceedings of that Government. Lebrun accused the Pitt Cabinet of raising difficulties of form and of discovering hostile intentions where none existed. While repudiating the notion of annexing Belgium, he firmly adhered to the Scheldt decree. France, he declared, would respond to all appeals which emanated from the general will of a nation, and he even asserted that she could treat only with a Government which "is deemed the organ of the general will of the nation governed." If her efforts for peace failed, she would fight England with regret but without fear.[2]

In effect, then, this despatch held out no hope of a reconciliation. There came with it, however, a long and rambling letter from Maret to Miles, which was intended partly to threaten, partly to cajole the Ministry. In its more dulcet passages the hope was set forth that the Scheldt affair could be settled, and even that Chauvelin might be replaced by the estimable Barthélemy. Miles, highly elated, hurried to the Foreign Office on that momentous Sunday, 13th January, and found that a Cabinet meeting was proceeding. Pitt came out and cordially received Maret's note. He returned to the Cabinet meeting (at which, strange to say, Burke was present) but came out again "furious, freighted with the bile of the whole Cabinet," and forbade Miles to have any dealings with the French Executive Council.[1]

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[1] Whether Chauvelin was guilty of any worse offence than entertaining at his house the editors of Opposition newspapers (Miles, "Corresp.," i, 440) is not proven. Maret admitted to Miles that some scoundrels were sowing sedition in England; but he added the not very comforting assurance that, in that case, they would cease to be Frenchmen. Miles evidently believed those intrigues to be the work of French emissaries. (*Ibid.*, 450, 451).

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxx, 262-6; "Ann. Reg.," 119-22.

How are we to explain this change from affability to anger? The impressionable Miles believed that in that hour Pitt capitulated to Burke and became a man of war. The reader who takes the trouble to compare Lebrun's note with that of Maret will probably come to another conclusion, namely, that the latter seems very like a device to throw the British Ministry off its guard. The terms of the two notes are widely divergent; and, in such a case, Pitt naturally accepted that of Lebrun and scouted that of Maret, as of a busybody or an intriguer. Grenville objected to this double-dealing;[2] and probably the presence of Burke at the Cabinet meeting sharpened the demand for its cessation.

Another explanation of Pitt's fury is possible. Grenville and he may have received news of the warlike preparations going on in the French seaports and on the Dutch borders. I have found no proof of this; but it is certain that by this time they must have had before them the inflammatory appeal of Monge to French and English Jacobins as well as the boastful tirade of Kersaint to the Convention. Having these proofs of the warlike ardour of the French and of their reliance on British reformers, how could Pitt and Grenville look on the philanthropic professions of Maret as anything but a snare, and Miles as his dupe? Miles had ever been officious. Clearly the time had come to stop his fussy advances to an unofficial agent, which Lebrun might once more ascribe to Pitt's secret fear of France.

It would be interesting to discover how far Pitt and Grenville were at this time aware of the secret designs of the French Executive Council. On this topic I have found no definite evidence. It is very unlikely that on 13th January they knew of the aggressive plans which the Executive Council had formed three days before. But it is certain that such plans were set on foot on 10th January. On that day the Executive Council drew up secret orders for Generals Dumouriez and Miranda. The former was then at Paris concerting plans for the next

[1] Miles, "Corresp.," ii, 28-36, 42. See, too, Sorel, iii, 258, on Maret's letter.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 366; but see Miles, "Corresp.," ii, 43, 44.

campaign, not for the purpose of saving Louis XVI, as he afterwards stated. Whether he fanned the warlike ardour of the Executive Council will perhaps never be known. But undoubtedly on 10th January the Executive Council bade him order his lieutenant, Miranda, to prepare for the invasion of Dutch Flanders and Walcheren within twelve days. Furnaces were to be supplied to the French gun-vessels in the Scheldt so as to beat off the frigates, whether English or Dutch is not stated.[1]

Why did not Miranda carry out this plan? Merely because he had neither stores nor food[2]—a fact which justifies the British Government in placing an embargo on the corn intended for France. Undoubtedly if he had had supplies, Miranda would have seized the lands at the mouth of the Scheldt, and cut off the retreat of the Stadholder to his place of refuge, Walcheren. It will further be observed that these orders were given at Paris three days after the despatch of Lebrun's and Maret's notes to London. The design apparently was to amuse England until a deadly blow could be struck at the Dutch. Auckland, writing on the 11th at The Hague, expressed to Grenville the hope that war might be avoided, or, if that were impossible, that the rupture should be postponed until the Austrians and Prussians had re-crossed the Rhine. The preparations of the Dutch were going on with the usual slowness.[3] Evidently the French Government counted on their traditional inertia and on the malcontents in Great Britain and Ireland. The private letters of Maret, that *soi-disant* friend of peace, breathe full assurance of victory.[4]

Grenville of course sent no answer to the last missive of Maret; but to Lebrun he replied, on 18th January, that his explanations were wholly unsatisfactory, as they maintained the right of the Executive Council to annul treaties at will. Until satisfaction were granted for the aggressions on His Majesty's ally, he would continue to take all measures needful for their common safety. The terms of this reply were doubtless due to the last news received from Paris. On 12th January the arch-intriguer, Brissot, had fired off at the Convention a warlike harangue in which he depicted the British Ministry as helpless in the midst of a discontented populace and without a friend in the world. France could therefore easily arouse Ireland and Scotland to revolt, besides carrying liberty to India.[1] On the following day the Convention ordered the equipment of 30 sail-of-the-line and 20 frigates, and the construction of 25 sail-of-the-line and 20 frigates.

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[1] "Corresp. du Gén. Miranda avec le Gén. Dumouriez . . . depuis janvier 1793," 3-8. See "Dropmore P.," ii, 371, on Dumouriez' plan.

[2] *Ibid.*, 8.

[3] "Dropmore P.," ii, 365.

[4] Miles, ii, 36.

On his side Chauvelin saw the rupture to be imminent. In forwarding Grenville's despatch to Lebrun on the 19th he described his situation in London as intolerable, and added that no alternative but war was left. His assistant, Reinhard, ended a letter of that day to Miles with the words "*M. Chauvelin leaves.*" That resolve must have been strengthened by Grenville's haughty note of the 20th, stating that no special means could be taken to protect his couriers and that he must rank "among the general mass of foreigners resident in England." On the same day Grenville informed Sir James Murray, who had gone on a special mission to the Prussian headquarters, that war was likely to break out, as France "insists on terms entirely inconsistent with the Government of this country and His Majesty's dignity and honour." His Majesty is strenuously making preparations and hopes to concert plans with Prussia and Austria.[2]

Such was the state of affairs on 21st January, when Louis XVI laid his head on the block in the Place de la Révolution. The news of this tragedy reached London late in the afternoon of the 23rd; and the horror which it aroused led to a demand at the Haymarket that the farce should be put off. On the advice of the Cabinet George III now intervened. At a Court held on the morrow at the Queen's House (on the site of Buckingham Palace) an order was issued that Chauvelin, as the envoy deputed by Louis XVI, should leave the country on or before 1st February. But on or before 25th January, that is, before the news of this mandate can have reached Paris, Lebrun had decided to recall the French mission from London. On 25th January he wrote to Monsieur Greenville [*sic*] stating that, as his plenipotentiary, Chauvelin, had orders to return to Paris, Maret would proceed to London to look after the papers at the French Embassy. This statement merits attention; for it shows that Chauvelin's departure was hastened only a day

[1] "Gower's Despatches," 278.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 34447.

or two by the King's command;[1] and further it refutes the oft-repeated assertion that Maret came charged with offers of peace to which Pitt and Grenville paid no heed.

It will be well to examine this latter question somewhat closely. In order to understand the situation at Paris, we must remember that Dumouriez was at that time hesitating between an attack on Holland and a pacific mission to England. On 23rd January, while at Paris, he wrote two very significant letters, one to Miranda, the other to Auckland. In the former he states: "The Executive Council . . . has thought of sending me as special ambassador to England to make that country decide definitely for peace or war. Consequently *an order has been given for our ambassador, Chauvelin, to return.* To-morrow they will send a secret agent [Maret], very well known to Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, to ask the two parties (that is to say the whole nation) for a safe-conduct for me and an assurance that I shall be welcome. As I have to ask for *yes* or *no*, like Cato at Carthage, this mission will not last more than eight days." Pending the reply to the first question (says Dumouriez) he will set out for Dunkirk, Bruges, and Antwerp. His second letter, of the same date, is to Auckland at The Hague, stating that he knows him to be desirous of peace, as he himself is. Can they not have an interview on the Dutch frontier, near Antwerp, where he will be on 30th January?[2]

Now it is clear from Grenville's and Auckland's correspondence that Ministers paid some heed to the offer of Dumouriez. Nothing came of it owing to the arrival of news of the French declaration of war; but the proposal was at least considered.[3] There is not a line to show that Pitt and Grenville took Maret's so-called "mission" at all seriously. For, in the first place, he had no powers, no authority to do anything more than collect the papers of the embassy. He himself gave out to Miles that he came on a "pacific mission," but he carefully refrained from telling even him what it was.[1] His biographer, Ernouf, has invested his journey to London with some importance by declaring that on 22nd January he (Maret) drew up and sent off a "despatch" to Chauvelin, stating that the French Executive Council desired peace, and that he was coming as *chargé d'affaires* to the French Embassy in London. This missive (whether signed by Lebrun is not stated) met Chauvelin on his way from London to Dover; but it produced no change whatever in his plans. He proceeded on his way to Paris, passing Maret in the night near Abbeville. To assign much importance to his "despatch" is to overrate both his errand and his position at Paris. Maret was only one of the head clerks at the French Foreign Office and had no right to sign official despatches. If he really was charged by Lebrun to tender the olive-branch, why was not that despatch sent to London in a form and manner which would procure credence and have some effect? Again, if Maret came to restore peace, why did he not at once produce his powers? The question was infinitely important and undeniably urgent. Instead of taking decisive action, as any well-wisher of mankind must have done at so awful a crisis, he declined to enter into particulars, and, on the plea that Chauvelin was ordered to Paris (which he himself knew before he left that city) waited for further instructions—which never came. Finally he confessed to Miles that he came to prepare the way for Dumouriez and to discover whether that general would be assured of personal safety if he came to England.

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[1] "F. O.," France, 41. The order to Chauvelin must have been given earlier, probably on 22nd January, as will be seen by Dumouriez' letter to Miranda soon to be quoted. George III's order of 24th January (endorsed by Pitt) for Chauvelin's expulsion cannot have the importance which Mr. J. L. le B. Hammond ("Fox," 262-3) assigns to it. See "Eng. Historical Review" (April 1912) for Lebrun's letter to Grenville.

[2] Published in "Dumouriez, etc.," 159, 160, by J. H. Rose and A. M. Broadley, from B.M. Add. MSS., 34447.

[3] Lecky, vi, 119-22.

Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.

Such must have been the thought of Miles, when he heard this singular admission. For what trust could be placed in Dumouriez, whose conquest of Belgium—the source of the present difficulties—had by no means sated his desire for its natural sequel, the conquest of Holland? That Maret had credentials of some kind may be admitted; for he showed them to Miles and claimed to be *chargé d'affaires*; but, as Miles found his powers to be "extremely limited,"[2] we may doubt whether they extended beyond the collection and transport of the archives of Portman Square. If he had any authority to treat with our Government, it is curious that he refrained from doing so merely on the ground of Chauvelin's departure. "Apprehensive that this event might derange what had been agreed upon, he despatched a messenger with a letter to Lebrun stating that *under the present circumstances, he should not think himself authorized to communicate with the British Ministers without fresh instructions.*"[1]

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[1] Miles, "Corresp.," ii, 55.

[2] Miles, "Conduct of France towards Gt. Britain," 108; "Corresp.," ii, 62.

Notwithstanding the urgency of the case, he received not a line, not even a newspaper, from Paris during his stay in London. In fact, the *soi-disant* "*chargé d'affaires*" of France knew so little of the real state of affairs that he assured Miles of the desire of his countrymen to give up Nice, Mainz, Worms, the Rhineland, the Scheldt, and the Low Countries[2]—at the very time (31st January) when Danton carried unanimously a decree annexing the Low Countries to the French Republic.

The explanation of the silence of Maret and the ambiguous conduct of Dumouriez may be found in the Memoirs of the latter. He states that a proposal came up in the French Executive Council at Paris on 22nd January to send him to London; but it was negatived by three votes to two. Nevertheless, he arranged with the minority (Lebrun and Garat) that he should go to Antwerp and have *pourparlers* with Auckland preparatory to a mission to England, while Maret returned to London to pave the way for him.[3] The scheme was a private venture, proposed by Dumouriez, and favoured only by the minority of the Council. In such a case neither Dumouriez nor Maret could be invested with official functions; and it was only a last despairing effort for peace that led Maret to pose as a *chargé d'affaires* and write to Paris for "fresh instructions." This praiseworthy device did not altogether impose even on Miles, who clearly was puzzled by the air of mystery that his friend assumed.

In view of the facts now set forth, can we blame Pitt and Grenville for declining to treat with Maret? He brought with him no proof that he had any other function than that of taking over the archives of the French embassy. Grenville stated to Auckland that Maret's presence caused much dabbling in the funds, and that his presence was most undesirable if Dumouriez really intended to treat for peace. Pitt afterwards assured the

[1] Miles, "Conduct of France towards Great Britain," 108.

[2] Miles, "Corresp.," ii, 62.

[3] Dumouriez, "Méms.," ii, 128-31 (edit. of 1794).

House of Commons that Maret had not made the smallest communication to Ministers.[1] Evidently they looked on him as an unofficial emissary, to which level Chauvelin had persistently endeavoured to degrade him.

Finally, on 4th February, Grenville ordered Maret to leave the country. By this time news had arrived from Paris that France had laid an embargo on British ships in her ports; and this portended more serious news. By that time the die was cast. On 31st January Danton carried the Convention with him in a fiery speech, crowned with that gigantic phrase—"Let us fling down to the Kings the head of a King as gage of battle"; then, in defiance of the well-known facts of the case, he urged the deputies to decree an act of political union with the Belgians, who were already one at heart with them. On the following day the Convention confirmed this aggressive action by unanimously decreeing war against Great Britain and Holland. By so doing the deputies of France merely endorsed the decision formed by the Executive Council on 10th January.

The outbreak of war between France and England is an event so fraught with momentous issues to Pitt, to the two Powers, and to the whole world, that I have striven to set forth as fully as possible every incident, every misunderstanding, every collision of interests or feelings, that brought it to pass. No episode in the development of the nations of Europe is so tragic as this. That two peoples should, within the space of nine months, abjure their friendly relations and furiously grapple in a life and death struggle over questions of secondary importance leads the dazed beholder at first to grope after the old Greek idea of ἄτη or Nemesis. In reality the case does not call for supernatural agency. The story is pitiably human, if the student will but master its complex details. It may be well to close our study with a few general observations, though they almost necessarily involve the risk of over-statement.

Firstly, the position of absolute neutrality which Pitt took up from the beginning of the troubles in France was extremely difficult to maintain amidst the rising passions of the year 1792. The Franco-Austrian war soon led to a situation in which the future conduct of the neutral aroused far more suspicion, and scarcely less hatred, than that of the enemy himself. When brains reeled with rage against tyrants; when cheeks flushed at the thought of the woes of Marie Antoinette, correct neutrality seemed inhuman. In an age that vibrated to the appeals of Madame Roland and Burke, cold passivity aroused doubt or contempt. Yet it is certain that Pitt and Grenville clung to that position, even when its difficulties increased tenfold with the fall of the monarchy and the September massacres. Lebrun, on coming into office after the former of those events, was careful to inform his countrymen that the withdrawal of the British ambassador was not an unfriendly act, and that England was making no preparations for war. Later on he chose to represent Pitt's conduct as persistently unfriendly; but his earlier words prove the contrary.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxx, 350. Fox admitted (p. 371) that Maret did not think himself authorized to negotiate. See, too, Bland Burges in "Auckland Journals," ii, 493. I cannot agree with Mr. Oscar Browning ("Varennes, etc.," 198), and Mr. J. L. le B. Hammond ("Fox," 258) as to the importance of Maret's "mission." Lecky (vi, 126) also overrates it, in my judgement.

Again, was it practicable (as Fox claimed) for Pitt to forbid Austria and Prussia to coalesce against France? Probably it was not possible, without bringing Russia and Sweden into the field on the royalist side. In the excited state of men's minds, an act so annoying as that of armed mediation would have widened the circle of war; and, as we have seen, it was the belief of Pitt and Grenville, in August—September 1792, that the continental war might probably end from the inability of the combatants to continue it. No one at that time foresaw the easy conquest of Savoy and the Low Countries by the French troops. In one of the few references to foreign affairs in Pitt's letters of the month following, we find him stating that if France conquers and keeps Savoy, a new situation will arise.[1] But he remained passive while the French drove the Sardinian troops from Savoy; and his whole conduct at this time moved Burke to indignation, if not despair. So late as 6th November Grenville expressed to Auckland his firm belief in the policy of strict neutrality.[2]

What was it, then, that blighted these hopes? The answer must be that the French victory of Jemappes (6th November) and the phenomenally easy conquest of the Austrian Netherlands speedily brought about a new and most threatening situation.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 322.

[2] "Auckland Journals," ii, 465.

It has been usual to say, with Goethe, that Valmy was the birth of a new age. Far more truly may we say so of Jemappes and its immediate results. That decisive triumph and the welcome accorded by the liberated Belgians opened up vistas of beneficent triumph that set the brain of France in a whirl. Hence the decrees of 16th November—15th December, which tear to pieces the old diplomacy, and apply to astonished Europe the gospel of Rousseau. In place of musty treaties there will be Social Contracts; instead of States there will be nations that will speak straight to one another's heart. They do speak: English Radical Clubs speak to the heart of France, the Convention; and Grégoire, President of that body, makes answer that if the rulers of England threaten the delegates and their comrades, Frenchmen will cross the Straits and fly to their help —"Come, generous Britons," he cries, "let us all confederate for the welfare of Humanity."[1] In the new age, then, political life will be a series of *tableaux* from the gospel of Rousseau. To the true believer there can be no compromise. Relics of old-world customs, such as the closing of the Scheldt by the Dutch, must vanish. Here, as elsewhere, Nature will infallibly guide men aright.

It was the application of these principles to our ally, the Dutch Republic, which Pitt refused to accept, especially as their corollary made for the aggrandisement of France. In his eyes international law imposed stringent obligations, which no one State, or nation, had the right to revoke. Old world theories of life, when rudely assailed at Paris, moved their champions to an enthusiasm scarcely less keen than that of the Jacobins. Britons who fraternized with the new hierophants were counted traitors to their King. Moreover, by a most unfortunate coincidence, the British Government publicly announced its resolve to support the Dutch Republic on the very day when the French Convention passed the first of its subversive decrees. Thus, national pride came sharply into conflict. Neither side could give way without seeming to betray alike its principles and its honour.

Personal questions played a baneful part in embittering the feud. Pitt and Grenville shrouded themselves in their insular and innate austerity. They judged the English Radical clubs too harshly; they ascribed to those who congratulated the Convention on 28th November treasonable aims which can scarcely have arisen in England when the addresses were drawn up. Apart from frothy republican talk, which should have been treated with quiet contempt, those congratulations contained no sign of consciousness that France was about to challenge us to conflict. We may admit that Frost and Barlow showed great tactlessness in presenting those addresses when friction between the two nations had already begun; for the incident, besides stiffening the necks of Frenchmen, gave the Reform movement an appearance of disloyalty to England which worked infinite harm. Nevertheless, on reviewing these questions, we see that Pitt treated the foolish ebullitions of youth as though they implied malice.

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[1] "Moniteur," 29th November 1792.

Surely, too, he, and still more Grenville, were unwise in placing Chauvelin under a political and social ban, which naturally led him to consort with the bitterest enemies of Government in order to annoy Ministers here and please his employers at Paris. A touchy and sensitive nature like Chauvelin's is usually open to the soothing influences of flattery. Grenville, however, drove him to open enmity, which finally wreaked its revenge;[1] for it was Chauvelin's report on the readiness of Britons to revolt which finally decided the Convention to declare war on 1st February. We may also inquire why the Court of St. James's did not make clear the course of conduct which it proposed to take in the future respecting France.[2] As outlined in the despatch of 29th December to Whitworth, it formed the basis of a practicable compromise. If it could be stated confidentially to Russia Austria, and Prussia, why not to France? Probably the objections of George III to the faintest sign of recognition of the French Republic[3] account for the fact that these enlightened intentions remained, down to the year 1800, secret except to those Powers. But statesmen err when they bury their good intentions in the secrecy of archives and allow public opinion to sympathize with the enemy. Here was Pitt's most serious blunder. At the outset of the struggle, and throughout its course, he scorned those tactful arts and melodramatic ways which win over waverers and inspire the fainthearted. Here he showed himself not a son of Chatham, but a Grenville. The results of this frigidity were disastrous. All Frenchmen and many Britons believed that he went out of his way to assail a peaceful Republic in order to crush liberty abroad and at home. History has exposed the falseness of the slander; but a statesman ought not to owe his vindication to research in archives. He needs whole-hearted support in the present more than justification by students.

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[1] Maret stated that "M. Chauvelin had shamefully deceived the Executive Council, and that nothing but misrepresentations and falsehoods had marked his despatches since he lost all hope of remaining in this country" (Miles, "Corresp.," ii, 62).

[2] Wilberforce urged this ("Life," ii, 13).

[3] "Dropmore P.," ii, 339, 351, 378.

In this respect Pitt showed less of worldly wisdom than the journalists and barristers who leaped to power at Paris. Their chief source of strength lay in skilful appeals to popular passion. In reality their case was untenable before any calm and judicial tribunal. But the France of that age was anything but calm and judicial. It lived on enthusiasm and sensation; and the Girondins and Jacobins fed it almost to repletion. Unfortunately Danton, the only man who combined strength with some insight into statecraft, was away in Belgium while the crisis developed; and the conduct of affairs rested mainly with Lebrun and his envoy Chauvelin. It is only fair to remember that they were thirty and twenty-seven years of age respectively, and had had just four months and eight months of official experience. In such a case pity must blend with censure. The frightful loss of experienced men and the giddy preference for new-comers were among the most fatal characteristics of the revolutionary movement. Needing natures that were able, yet self-restrained, bold, but cautiously bold, it now found as leaders calculating fanatics like Robespierre, headstrong orators and wire-pullers like the Girondin leaders, or lucky journalists like Lebrun. To play to the gallery was his first instinct; and the tottering fortunes of the Gironde made it almost a necessity. Hence his refusal and that of his colleagues to draw back a hair's breadth from the unjustifiable position which they had taken up. Behind them loomed the September massacres, fatal to two Foreign Ministers of France; before them shone the splendours of a liberating crusade. We can scarcely blame men so ardent, so hard pressed.

But there are some rules of the game which even the most irresponsible of Ministers must observe. Here both Chauvelin and Lebrun went fatally astray. Chauvelin's *pique* at the interview which Pitt had with Maret on 2nd December led him flagrantly to misrepresent that incident, and Lebrun, as we have seen, reported it to the Convention in such a way as to impute to Pitt a discreditable and cowardly intrigue. This is the climax of malice. An envoy and a Minister who scatter such insinuations are the most reckless of firebrands. By this conduct both Lebrun and Chauvelin inflamed the passions of their countrymen. In truth, it was passion, not policy, that made the war. The charges which they brought against England were of secondary importance—her demand for the revocation of the decrees concerning the Scheldt and the encouragement offered to malcontents, together with her stoppage of corn ships lading for France, and her Aliens Bill. Such were the pretexts for the recall of Chauvelin, which, as we have seen, was decided at Paris before the Court of St. James's determined to dismiss him.

Another fact comes out clearly from a survey of the evidence given above, namely, that the execution of Louis XVI was in no sense the cause of the war. The question turned essentially on the conduct of France towards our Dutch Allies. Before Louis was put on his trial Pitt and Grenville had decided that the French must retract their aggressive decree against Holland, backed up as it was by a claim to support malcontents in any land. Failing this, war would have ensued, even if Louis had not been condemned to death. The tragedy of 21st January made no difference to the issue; for, as we have seen, the French Government by 10th January decided to push on its plans against the Dutch Republic. It is also impossible to attach any importance to the vague offers of Dumouriez and Maret, at which Lebrun connived probably so as to be able to say, without committing himself in the least, that he had done all he could for peace.

We may therefore conclude that the wealth and defencelessness of the Dutch Netherlands lured on the enthusiasts and intriguers of Paris to an enterprise the terrible results of which were unsuspected by them. Nothing is more remarkable than the full assurance of victory which breathes in the letters of Dumouriez, the despatches of Lebrun, and the speeches of the French deputies. Experienced statesmen were soon to stand aghast at the triumph of the Republican arms; but it fell short of the hopes of the French politicians. In this boundless self-confidence, sublime were it not so disastrous, is to be found the chief cause of war in 1793.

CHAPTER V

THE FLEMISH CAMPAIGN (1793)

The war is not only unavoidable, but, under the circumstances of the case, absolutely necessary to the existence of Great Britain and Europe.—PITT, Speech of 11th March, 1793.

IN this chapter and the following, dealing with phases of the Great War, the narrative may seem at times to diverge far from the life of Pitt. But, in truth, his career now depended upon the issue of this gigantic strife. Therefore an account merely of his domestic concerns, of the debates at Westminster, or even of British and Irish affairs, would be a one-sided and superficial sketch. For in reality his destiny, together with that of Great Britain and of Europe at large, turned upon the events that unfolded themselves in Flanders and the Rhineland, at Toulon and Quiberon, in Hayti, Corsica, and Egypt. As these in their turn were potently influenced by the policy pursued at Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and Madrid, we must take a survey, wide but minute, sometimes to all appearance diffuse, yet in reality vitally related to the main theme. In order to simplify the narrative, I have sought to disentangle the strands of war policy and to follow them severally, connecting them, however, in the chapter entitled "Pitt as War Minister," which will sum up the results of these studies on the period 1793-8.

If proof be needed that Pitt entered upon the French war with regret, it may be found in the fact that on 5th February he and Grenville empowered Auckland to discuss the pacific overtures of Dumouriez. Grenville, it is true, saw in this move merely a device to gain time;[1] and we may detect in the British reply the sanguine nature of the Prime Minister. But his hopes ended on 8th February, when news arrived of the declaration of war by the French Convention against Great Britain and Holland. Thereupon Pitt entered into the struggle without a shadow of doubt.[1] For him it was always a struggle to prevent the domination of the Netherlands by France; and we may note, as a sign of the continuity of that policy, that on it largely depended the rupture with Napoleon in 1803. Pitt summed up the object of the war in the word "security." In his view, as in that of his successor, Castlereagh, national security was wholly incompatible with the possession of Holland, or even the Belgic Provinces, by France.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 377.

In taking this practical view of the crisis Pitt differed sharply from George III and Burke. They looked on the struggle as one for the restoration of monarchy. The King on 9th February wrote to Grenville that he hoped the war would be the "means of restoring some degree of order to that unprincipled country," and Burke flung into an unquotable phrase his anger that the war should turn on the question of the Scheldt.[2] For the present the aggressive conduct of France welded together these two wings of the royalist party; but events were soon to reveal the fundamental difference of view. Indeed, it coloured all their opinions about the struggle. Wilberforce reports Pitt as saying that the war would be a short war, and certainly ended in one or two campaigns. "No, Sir," retorted Burke, "it will be a long war and a dangerous war, but it must be undertaken."[3] In his eyes the struggle was one between two irreconcilable principles—democracy and monarchy. Certainly the effort to force 25,000,000 Frenchmen back into the well-worn grooves was stupendous. Further, the great Irishman, with the idealism and chivalry which invest his nature with so much charm, urged the Allies to abjure all thought of indemnifying themselves at the expense of France, and to declare their sole aim to be the destruction of anarchy and the restoration of monarchy, a course of action which would range on their side a large number of Frenchmen and avert all risk of identifying that nation with the regicide Republic. The new letters of Burke suggest the advantages of such a declaration and most justly censure the Allies for avowing their intention of taking land from France. The old man saw clearly that by so doing they banded Frenchmen together for a national effort. In the following pages the thoughtful reader will notice the disastrous effects of this blunder. Here Burke stood on strong ground; and Pitt was far from guiltless.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxx, 565.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 378; Prior, "Burke," 368.

[3] "Life of Wilberforce," ii, 11. Note the statement of George Rose to Auckland (8th February, 1793): "Our revenue goes on gloriously. The year ending 5th January shows £300,000 more than the year preceding. . . . We may suffer in some respects; but we must crush the miscreants" (B.M. Add MSS., 34448).

On the general question, however, whether the war should be for the restoration of monarchy or the attainment of security, Pitt's position is unassailable. For the mere suspicion that the Allies intended to impose Louis XVII on France condemned monarchy in the eyes of patriotic Frenchmen. Only amidst the exhaustion following on the Napoleonic wars could an intensely patriotic people accept a king at the sword's point. In the first glow of democratic ardour absolute destruction seemed preferable to so craven a surrender. While, then, we join Burke in censuring the procedure of the Allies, we must pronounce his advice fatal to the cause which he wished to commend. Further, his was a counsel of perfection to Austria, England, and the Dutch Republic. Deeming themselves attacked by France, they were determined to gain security from the reckless schemes of aggrandizing philanthropy now in favour at Paris; and, viewing the matter impartially, we must admit that they were right. The French having been the aggressors, the three States justly demanded security at that weak point in the European system, the Flemish border. Further, as Pitt limited his aims to the expulsion of the French from the Low Countries, he might reasonably hope for a speedy peace, the task which he set before himself being far smaller than that of forcing a king back on the French nation.[1] Ultimately the stiffneckedness of Napoleon brought all the Powers to the latter solution; but no one in 1793 could foresee the monstrous claim for "the natural frontiers"—the Rhine, Alps, Pyrenees, and Ocean—which prolonged the struggle to the year 1814.

Pitt's optimism will appear not unnatural, if we review the general situation early in the year 1793. The political atmo-

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 32 (Stratton to Grenville, 22nd December, 1792). Cobenzl, Austrian Chancellor, assured Stratton that Francis II would require from France "l'établissement d'une constitution quelconque fondée sur les bases les plus essentiels du gouvernement monarchique."

In view of these considerations I cannot endorse Lecky's censure (vi, 134) on Pitt's "blindness" as to the character of the war sphere was disturbed by two cyclones, one in the west, the other in the east, of Europe. That which centred in the French Revolution seemed to have reached its maximum intensity; and skilled observers augured from the execution of Louis XVI a relapse into savage but almost helpless anarchy. The recent successes of the French in the Rhineland and Brabant were rightly ascribed to the supineness of Prussia and Austria; and already the armies of Custine and Dumouriez were in sore straits. The plunder of the liberated peoples by the troops and by commissioners sent to carry out the decrees of fraternity had led to sharp reprisals all along the straggling front from Mainz to Bruges; and now Danton's decree of 31st January, annexing the Belgic provinces to France, exasperated that people.

Further, the men in power at Paris had as yet shown no organizing capacity. The administration of the War Department by "papa" Pache had been a masterpiece of imbecile knavery which infuriated Dumouriez and his half-starving troops. We have heard much of the blunders of British Ministers in this war; but even at their worst they never sank to the depths revealed in the correspondence of Dumouriez with Pache. In truth, both Powers began the war very badly; but France repaired her faults far more quickly, chiefly because the young democracy soon came to award the guillotine for incompetent conduct over which the nepotism of Whitehall spread a decent cloak. The discovery by the Jacobins of the law of the survival of the fittest served to array the military genius of France against Court favourites or the dull products of the system of seniority.

For the present, the misery of the French troops, the immense extent of their lines, and the singular ingratitude of the liberated peoples, promised a speedy reversal of the campaign of 1792. For the re-conquest of Belgium, the Allies now had ready on or near the Rhine 55,000 Austrians under the Duke of Coburg. On their right were 11,000 Prussians, under Frederick of Brunswick-Oels, and 13,000 Hanoverians, destined for Guelderland. These last were to be paid by the Maritime Powers. In reserve were 33,000 Prussians, under Hohenlohe-Kirchberg. For the invasion of Eastern France, Frederick William of Prussia marshalled, near Frankfurt, a force of 42,000 of his own troops, together with 14,000 other Germans. Further south was General Wurmser with 24,000 Austrians. And this was not all. The Holy Roman Empire promised a force of 120,000, whenever its Translucencies, Bishops, Abbesses, and Knights could muster them; and further east there loomed the hosts of Russia. If these forces had been used straightforwardly, France must have been overborne.[1]

But the half of them were not used at all. Before the campaign opened, the eastern cyclone drew to itself the energies which ostensibly were directed against France. Just one week before the execution of Louis XVI, five Prussian columns crossed the borders of Poland. This act aroused a furious outcry, especially as Frederick William preluded it by a manifesto hypocritically dwelling upon the danger of allowing Jacobinism to take root in Poland. Fears of Prussian and Muscovite rapacity had induced Pitt and Grenville to seek disclaimers of partition at Berlin and St. Petersburg. Assurances enough were forthcoming. On 29th January 1793 Markoff sought to convince Whitworth that no partition was intended.[2] But in view of the entire passivity of Pitt on the Polish Question since his surrender to Catharine in 1791 the two Powers laid their plans for the act of robbery which took place a few months later.[3]

In this they had the rather doubtful acquiescence of Austria, provided that they furthered the Belgic-Bavarian exchange so long favoured at Vienna and resisted at Berlin. As we have seen, Pitt strongly opposed the exchange; but, early in February 1793, Grenville and he heard that the Emperor Francis II hoped to facilitate the transference of the Elector of Bavaria from Munich to Brussels by adding Lille and Valenciennes to his new dominion.[4] These tidings led them to adopt a decision which was largely to influence the course of the war. They resolved to commit Austria deeply to war with France by favouring the acquisition of Lille and Valenciennes by the Hapsburgs provided that they retained Belgium. This, however, was far from the wishes of that Court, which longed for parts of Alsace and Lorraine, and viewed Belgium merely as a sop to be flung to the Elector of Bavaria.[5]

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[1] Sir James Murray, our envoy at Frankfurt, was assured on 1st February that 138,419 Austrians were ready for the campaign.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 34448.

[3] See Martens, v, 530-5, for the Russo-Prussian treaty of 13th July 1793.

[4] Murray to Grenville, 19th January 1793; see "Eng. Historical Review (1912)."

[5] Vivenot, ii, 498-506.

Was there ever a more singular game of cross-purposes? Austria pursued the war with France chiefly with the object of gaining Bavaria and parts of Eastern France, Belgium (with Lille and Valenciennes) being allotted to the Elector uprooted at Munich. Prussia and Russia promised to abet this scheme as a set-off to their prospective plunder of Poland; but, obviously, after securing their booty in the summer of 1793, they had no interest in aggrandizing the House of Hapsburg. Further, England entered on the Flemish campaign with motives widely different from those of Austria. Pitt and Grenville sought to plant her more firmly at Brussels by girdling her with the fortresses of French Flanders; but she sought to recover Belgium only to fling it to the Elector. Finally neither Russia nor the German Powers cared an iota about the security of Holland. Their eyes were fixed on Warsaw or Munich. In truth, despite all their protestations as to the need of re-establishing the French monarchy, they were mainly bent on continuing the territorial scrambles of former years. The two aims were utterly incompatible.

In comparison with the motives prompting the actions of States, treaties are of secondary importance. Nevertheless (to finish with these wearisome details) we may note that on 25th March Grenville and Vorontzoff signed at Downing Street a treaty of alliance whereby Russia promised, firstly, to use her forces, along with those of England, against France; secondly, to prevent neutrals from helping France indirectly (a clause which involved the lapse of the principles of the Armed Neutrality), and thirdly, to grant to England a favourable commercial treaty.[1] Agreement with Prussia and Austria was more difficult, but at last, on 14th July and 30th August, compacts were signed with them for military aid in return for subsidies; and in the spring and summer of 1793 Grenville arranged similar conventions with Sardinia, Hesse-Cassel, Spain, and Naples. In this haphazard manner did these States agree to war against France. Their aims being as diverse as their methods were disjointed, the term "First Coalition" applied to this league is almost a misnomer.

Before describing the first campaign of the war it will be well briefly to survey the armed forces of the Crown and the organization for war. Firstly, we must remember that Pitt had devoted great attention to the navy and to the fortification of Portsmouth and Plymouth. Despite the hostile vote of the House of Commons in 1785, he had succeeded in finding money enough to enable the Duke of Richmond to place those dockyard towns beyond reach of a *coup de main*; and to Pitt may be ascribed the unquestioned superiority of Britain at sea. Of the 113 sail-of-the-line then available, about 90 could soon be placed in commission, that is, so soon as the press-gang provided the larger part of the *personnel.*

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[1] Martens, v, 438-42.

The state of the army was far less satisfactory. Never, in all probability, since the ignominious times of Charles II, had it been in so weak a condition relatively to the Continental Powers. In the Budget of 1792 Pitt asked merely for 17,013 men as guards and garrisons in these islands; and he reduced even that scanty force to 13,701 men for the next six months. The regiments were in some cases little more than skeletons, but with a fairly full complement of officers. Nominally the army consisted of eighty-one battalions; but of these the West Indies claimed as many as nineteen. India needed nine; and on the whole only twenty-eight line regiments, together with the Guards and the cavalry, remained for the defence of Great Britain and Ireland. Efforts were made in December 1792 to bring in recruits, but with little effect. The defence of London, the dockyard towns, and other important posts, depended of course partly on the militia; 19,000 of that useful force were embodied early in February. But as the authorities forbore to compel men to serve in person, there was a rush for substitutes, which naturally told against recruiting for the Line.[1] Volunteer Associations were also relied on for local defence, and for overawing the malcontent or disorderly elements in the populace. The safety of the coasts and therefore of the capital rested primarily with the navy; and for England the war promised to be almost entirely a naval war.

Equally chaotic was the administration for war. Some time in February 1793 Dundas sent to Pitt a Memorandum respecting a new arrangement of offices which had been mooted in the Cabinet. The need of some change may be judged by the fact that Dundas was Secretary for Home Affairs (down to July 1794), First Commissioner for India (that is, virtually, Secretary for India), and Treasurer of the Navy, besides drawing glory and profit from his airy duties of Groom of the Stole. What changes had been proposed does not appear; but Dundas expressed himself as follows: "First: That I should remain precisely as I am while the war continues, provided the arrangement takes place respecting the Groom of the Stole to Lord Chatham, together with all the consequent changes in other offices. This in my judgment is by much the best for the public service, and ought to supersede all other individual wishes." Failing this patriotic arrangement, Dundas requested that he should have the first claim for the Privy Seal for Scotland, provided that Lord Chatham did not take the Stole. He (Dundas) would give up the latter but retain his office at the India Board and the Navy. Or, thirdly, if he received the Privy Seal for Scotland, he would give up his other offices except that at the India Board. This last plan would involve a large reduction of income, but he preferred it to the others except the two previously named.[1]

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[1] Hon. J. W. Fortescue, "Hist. of the British Army," iv, 77-83.

Nevertheless no change of any importance took place. Dundas continued to be a portly pluralist, utterly unable to overtake the work of three important offices, with the conduct of the war often superadded; and Chatham remained at the Admiralty until the close of 1794, to the annoyance of all champions of efficiency. In the course of that year Pitt urged the need of strengthening both the Admiralty and War Departments; but, as we shall see, Dundas strongly objected to the creation of a Secretary of State for War, because his duties would overlap those of the other Departments, and important decisions must be formed by the Cabinet as a whole.[2] I shall touch on this question more fully in Chapter XII, but mention it here as a sign of the mental cloudiness which led British Ministers for the first eighteen months of the war to plod along with the most haphazard arrangements known even to that age. The contrast between the boyish irresponsibility of military management in England and the terrible concentration of power in the hands of Carnot at Paris, after July 1793, goes far to explain the disasters to the Union Jack after the first few months of the war.

The triumph of the French Republic and its transformation into a military Empire cannot be understood until we probe the inner weakness of the First Coalition and realize the unpreparedness of Great Britain. Moreover, as the Allies believed that

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

[2] Chevening MSS.

France would speedily succumb, the allocation of the spoil claimed their attention more than preparations for the hunt. The unexpected vigour of the French might have undeceived them. While Coburg was leisurely preparing to drive the levies of Dumouriez from the district between Verviers and Aix-la-Chapelle, the latter laid his plans for a dash into the almost unprotected Dutch Netherlands, where he hoped to find precious spoils and valuable munitions of war.[1] Breaking up therefore from Antwerp on 16th February, the Republicans quickly advanced towards the estuary known as the Hollandsdiep, while two other columns marched on Breda and Bergen-op-Zoom. As Dumouriez had foreseen, the torpor of the Stadholder's forces was as marked as the eagerness of the Dutch Patriots to welcome the invaders. Breda fell on 26th February; but he failed to cross the Hollandsdiep, for there the Sea Power intervened.

On 15th February Auckland begged that the Duke of York might be sent over with a few battalions. The Ministry at once answered the appeal. On 20th February seven battalions of the British Guards were paraded at Whitehall; the Duke of York announced that the first three would go to Holland, and asked for volunteers from the other four. The whole line stepped forward. Huddled on to small transports, the little force reached the Dutch estuaries in time to thwart the efforts of Dumouriez. Their arrival heartened the defenders of the Hollandsdiep, and held the French at bay. Meanwhile Coburg had bestirred himself, and, marching on Miranda's vanguard on the River Roer, threw it back in utter rout. Dumouriez, falling back hastily to succour his lieutenant, encountered the Austrian force at Neerwinden, where the unsteadiness of the Republican levies enabled Coburg and his brilliant lieutenant, the Archduke Charles, to win a decisive triumph (18th March). A great part of the French levies melted away. The Belgians rose against the retreating bands; and in a few days that land was lost to France. The failure of Dumouriez to turn his army against the Convention, and his flight to the Austrian outposts, need not be described here.[2] Suffice it to say that the northern frontier of France lay open to attack.

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[1] Murray reported to Grenville on 10th and 18th February that the Allies at Frankfurt were disturbed by news of the negotiation with Dumouriez. See too, Vivenot, ii, 489.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 377-81; "Dumouriez," by J. H. Rose and A. M. Broadley, 162-75.

An advance in force in the month of April or May might have ended the war.

But, as we have seen, the Allies were too jealous and too distrustful to act with the necessary vigour. Austria refused to recognize the Prussian scheme for the Partition of Poland; and the North German Power retaliated by withholding its contingent from the support of Coburg.[1] That commander, finding himself duped by the Prussians, pressed the British and Dutch Governments to send him succour. To this he had some claim; for it was the Austrian victory at Neerwinden which saved Holland from the French; and the best method of protecting that land was to capture the northern fortresses of France. The Dutch army numbered on paper 50,000 men; 13,500 Hanoverians were marching towards Guelderland; 8,000 Hessians were entering the British service. In such a case it would have been disgraceful not to assist Coburg in completing his triumph. Thus, as often happens with British expeditions, the scope of the Duke of York's operations now greatly widened. His original instructions of 23rd February ordered him not to move more than twenty-four hours away from Helvoetsluys. On 19th March, as the danger lessened, the War Office gave him leave to advance, moving on the right of Coburg's army towards Antwerp and Ghent.[2]

The news of Neerwinden led George III to adopt even more vigorous measures. True, he disliked Coburg's pressing demand for help, seeing that no treaty of alliance was formed; but he permitted the forward move on Ghent, and formulated a still bolder scheme, that the British, Hanoverians, and Dutch should advance to besiege Dunkirk; for the capture of that place would enable a siege-train to be brought easily to the Austrians for the leaguer of Lille and Valenciennes.[3] To Grenville he expressed the hope that these measures would speedily end the war.[4]

The letter is important as showing the great influence of the

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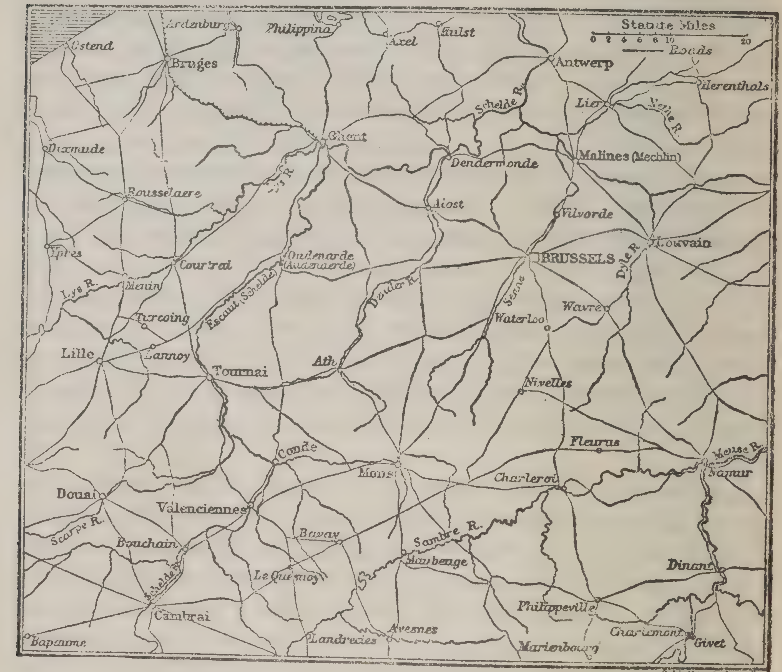
[1] "F. O.," Austria, 32, Morton Eden to Grenville, 30th March.

[2] "War Office" 6, (7); 23rd February, to Duke of York; B.M. Add. MSS 34448, Grenville to Auckland, 23rd February; Calvert, "Campaigns in Flanders and Holland," chs. i, ii.

[3] This letter (for which see "Pitt and Napoleon Miscellanies") corrects Mr. Fortescue's statement (iv, 125) that Ministers alone were responsible for the Dunkirk scheme. George III was morally responsible for it.

[4] "Dropmore P.," ii, 387.

King on military affairs. It must be remembered that Pitt, Grenville, and Dundas (the three leading members of the Cabinet) had no knowledge of these questions, while that shadowy personage, Sir George Yonge, Secretary at War, had no seat in the Cabinet. A more unsatisfactory state of things cannot be conceived. It tended to subject questions of military policy to that influential trio, which in its turn was swayed by the will of the King. According to constitutional custom, the Cabinet was collectively responsible for questions of war policy; but it is difficult to say how far Ministers were individually responsible. Pitt and Grenville certainly influenced the decisions arrived at; Dundas drew up and signed the chief military despatches; but the wishes of George III had great weight.



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SEAT OF WAR IN FLANDERS

In fact, questions of war policy turned largely on motives other than military. The resolve of the King and his Ministers to share in the invasion of France sprang not only from feelings of military honour, but also from the exigencies of diplomacy. By the middle of March it was clear that Russia and Prussia would acquire unexpectedly extensive tracts of Polish land. Francis II vented his spleen at this rebuff on his Chancellor, Philip Cobenzl, who was virtually disgraced, while a clever but unprincipled schemer, Thugut, took his place.[1] Another unwelcome surprise was in store. The Emperor had hoped to find in the Belgic-Bavarian exchange "compensation" for the presumedly moderate gains of his rivals in Poland. But to this plan, as we have seen, George III and his Ministers stoutly demurred; and Grenville held out the prospect of the acquisition of Lille and Valenciennes in order once more to lay that disquieting spectre. As it also alarmed some of the German princes, whose help was needed against France, the Court of Vienna saw this vision fade away until Thugut hit upon the design of conquering Alsace, and finding there the means of effecting the longed-for exchange. Pitt and Grenville, however, clung to the policy of rooting Austria firmly at Brussels, with Lille and Valenciennes as her outworks, and this involved the effort of winning those two fortresses for the Hapsburgs. Thugut suggested that, if Austria could not secure French Flanders, she must find compensation elsewhere; and he declined to satisfy Eden's curiosity on this threatening word.[2] It therefore behoved us to strengthen Austria's stroke at French Flanders, especially as she now acquiesced in the British contention, that the Allies should neither interfere with the form of Government in France nor recognize the Comte de Provence as Regent.[3]

The British Government, however, moved forward its troops into Flanders reluctantly, firstly, because it wanted to use them in the West Indies,[4] and also discerned the preference of Frederick William for a Polish to a Flemish campaign. That monarch and his generals left the Austrians to bear the brunt of everything on the banks of the Rhine, and also in Brabant. His manner of setting about the siege of Mainz was a masterpiece of politic delay, in which amorous dalliance played its part.[1] When complaints came from his Allies, he hotly retorted that Coburg had sent him only 5,000 troops from the northern army instead of the 15,000 that were promised. The Austrians replied with no less warmth that Coburg needed those 10,000 men because he had had no succour from the Prussian force supporting him. The result was that the Duke of York's corps was thrust into the part which the Prussian contingent ought to have taken. Accordingly Pitt and some of his colleagues deemed it preferable, now that Holland was safe, to withdraw the British troops with a view to a series of expeditions against the coasts and colonies of France. This problem called for a clear and decided solution. Nowhere do we so much lament the secrecy of Cabinet discussions as on these questions—should the meagre forces of Britain be used on maritime expeditions (their normal function in war), or form a petty division in the crusade of two great Military Powers; or, worst of all, should they be parcelled out in both kinds of warfare?

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 33, Eden to Grenville, 27th and 28th March, 10th April; Vivenot, ii, 541; Häusser, i, 483.

[2] *Ibid.*, Eden to Grenville, 15th April. This probably refers to Alsace; but it may possibly hint at a partition of Venice which had been mooted at Vienna before. A slice of Piedmont was also desired (Eden to Grenville, 8th June).

[3] *Ibid.*, Eden to Grenville, 30th March.

[4] The West India expedition was again and again deferred in favour of that to la Vendée or Toulon (Vivenot, iii, 383).

All that we know is that George III, on 29th March, strongly advocated the siege of Dunkirk, in the hope that the capture of that seaport would assist the Austrians in reducing the fortresses of French Flanders, and thus put an end to the war. On the other hand, the Duke of Richmond counselled the withdrawal of the British force for use against the coasts and colonies of France; and his two letters to Pitt, dated Goodwood, 3rd and 5th April, show that Pitt inclined to that opinion. The question was important in view of a forthcoming conference of the allied commanders and envoys at Antwerp. The letters are too long for quotation. In that of 3rd April the duke declares that Ministers must soon decide whether to persevere in Flanders or in maritime expeditions. "To attempt both is to do neither well." For himself, he would much prefer to attack Cherbourg, Brest, l'Orient, Rochefort, Nantes and Bordeaux; but he fears that the ardour of the Duke of York will lead him into an extensive campaign in Flanders.

In the second and longer letter, Richmond warns Pitt that, if he prefers to attack the ports and colonies of France (especially the West Indies), he ought at once to warn the envoys of the

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[1] Sybel, iii, 38-40; Häusser, i, 488, 489.

Allies at Antwerp (who were about to discuss the plan of campaign), that we could not long afford succour to them, and trusted that after six weeks they could do without it, or, at least, would need it only to a very slight extent. If, he continues, Coburg and the Prussians demur to this, we must reply that England was at first no party to the war, and entered into it only for the defence of the Dutch; that participation in a continental campaign is so unpopular and ruinous, that we may be compelled to desist from it; that by means of naval expeditions we can help the common cause steadily and effectively; and that we are in no position to act on the Continent because "our army, cavalry and infantry, consists almost wholly of recruits, no part of which (men or horses) have been raised two months, and the greater part of which are at this moment only raising." Further, if we clearly warn the Allies of our resolve to withdraw our troops they cannot complain of it. Pitt should therefore instruct Lord Auckland to give clear expression to these ideas. Coburg will then probably argue as to the extreme importance of clinching the successes already won, and will therefore urge the Duke of York to besiege Dunkirk, Graveline, and St. Omer, with a view to drawing him on finally towards Paris. But any such proceeding is to be resisted. The German Powers will dismember France; but we, having little military weight, shall probably gain next to nothing. Far more advantageous will be our action elsewhere, *e.g.*, in the seizure of Cherbourg, Toulon, etc. Richmond ends by requesting of Pitt the favour of an interview.

Either the interview did not take place, or the duke's arguments failed to lower the sanguine spirits of the Prime Minister to the level of prudence. All the letters of Pitt at that time exude confidence from every line. He hopes that Dumouriez will succeed in overthrowing the regicides at Paris. The backwardness of the Prussians in supporting Coburg does not deter him from ordering to Flanders all the available British and mercenary troops, in order to besiege Dunkirk, and otherwise help the Imperialists. As if this is not enough, on or just before 1st April he treats with Malouet, the French envoy from Hayti, for the transfer of that colony to the British Crown; he writes hopefully of finding a force large enough to make an attempt on the French coast; and a little later Grenville men-

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[1] Pretyman MSS. I have published the letter of 5th April 1793 almost in full in the "Eng. Hist. Rev." for April 1910.

tions a Mediterranean campaign. The King, too, in referring to a recent offer of peace from Paris, writes that the bounds of "that dangerous and faithless nation" must be greatly circumscribed before such a proposal can be entertained.[1]

Thus France is to be attacked in Flanders, on the north or north-west coast, on the Mediterranean coast and in Corsica, as well as the West Indies, by an army which musters scarcely 20,000 effectives. In this confidence, which wells forth into five distinct schemes, is to be found the cause for the Jacobin triumphs which shattered the First Coalition.

Austria and Prussia were equally puffed up with unreal hopes. At the conference at Antwerp in the second week of April occurred the first of the many blunders which helped to rally Frenchmen around the tricolour. Coburg's promise, in a recent proclamation to Dumouriez and the French nation, that the Allies would not make conquests at the expense of France, was warmly disavowed at the first sitting. Accordingly, a few days later, Coburg issued a second proclamation, announcing the end of the armistice and omitting all reference to his disinterested views. The change of tone speedily convinced the French people of the imminence of schemes of partition. This it was, quite as much as Jacobin fanaticism, which banded Frenchmen enthusiastically in the defence of the Republic. Patriotism strengthened the enthusiasm for liberty, and nerved twenty-five million Frenchmen with a resolve to fling back the sacrilegious invaders.

About this time the French Government sent pacific proposals to London, which met with no very encouraging reception, Pitt and Grenville probably regarding them as a means of sowing discord among the Allies, of worming out their plans, or of gaining time for the French preparations. It is indeed difficult to believe that they had any other object. After the defection of Dumouriez and his Staff, France was in a desperate state, and her rulers naturally sought to gain a brief respite. Grenville therefore replied that if France really desired to end the war which she had forced upon England, definite proposals might be sent to the British headquarters in the Netherlands.[2] None was sent.

Meanwhile, the jealousies of the German Powers, the delay of

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 388-93, 399.

[2] "F. O.," France, 42. I cannot agree with Sorel (iii, 405) in taking the French overtures seriously.

Austria in coming to terms with England, and the refusal of Coburg to define his plan of campaign, paralysed the actions of the Allies and saved France. As for the British force, it was too weak to act independently; and yet the pride of George III forbade its fusion in Coburg's army.[1] By the third week of April the Duke of York had with him 4,200 British infantry, 2,300 horsemen, besides 13,000 Hanoverians (clamorous for more pay), and 15,000 Dutch troops of poor quality and doubtful fidelity; 8,000 hired Hessians had not yet arrived.[2] Yet the King and his Ministers persisted in hoping for the conquest of French Flanders. The War Office despatch of 16th April specified as the chief aim of the war the re-conquest of the Low Countries by Austria, "with such extended and safe frontier as may secure the tranquillity and independence of Holland." But Pitt and his colleagues, far from concentrating on Flanders, continued to toy with expeditions to Brittany, Provence, Corsica, and the West Indies.

At first they pressed Coburg to consent to the deviation of the British force towards Dunkirk; and only on his urgent protest was that ex-centric move given up until Valenciennes should have fallen. The Austrian contention was undoubtedly right, as the British Government grudgingly admitted. The Duke of York's force therefore moved along with that of Coburg towards that fortress and showed great gallantry in compelling the French to evacuate the supporting camp of Famars (23rd May). Early in June the siege of Valenciennes began in earnest. A British officer described the defence of the French as "obstinate but not spirited." They made no sorties, and Custine's army of 40,000 men, which should have sought to raise the siege, did not attack, probably owing to the unsteadiness and apathy of his troops.[3] This lack of energy cost him his life; for on 10th July he was ordered back to Paris and soon went to the guillotine.

At that time the Jacobins were in a state of mind in which fury and despair struggled for the mastery. The outlook was as gloomy as before Valmy in September 1792. Bad news poured in from all sides. The Girondins, after the collapse of their power on 2nd June, appealed to the Departments, and two thirds of France seemed about to support them against the tyranny of the capital. Had not the Jacobins developed an organizing power immeasurably superior to that of the moderates, the royalists, and the Allies, the rule of that desperate minority must speedily have been swept away. On 12th July the Parisian Government declared itself at war with the moderates, who now had the upper hand at Lyons and in neighbouring districts. On that same day Condé (a small fortress north of Valenciennes) opened its gates. On 22nd July Mainz surrendered to the King of Prussia; and six days later the Austrian and British standards were hoisted on the ramparts of Valenciennes.

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[1] "W. O.," 6 (10), Dundas to Murray (now secretary to the Duke of York).

[2] Calvert, 80.

[3] Calvert, ch. iii; Fortescue, iv, 111.

This event raised to its climax the fury of the Jacobins; and on 9th August the Convention passed with acclamation a decree declaring Pitt to be an enemy of the human race. This singular manifestation of Gallic effervescence came about in the following way. The Committee of Public Safety having presented a report on the scarcity of corn and bread, the Convention was electrified by the doleful recital. In the ensuing debate stories are told of men disguised as women who practise insidious devices among the *queues* at the bakers' shops. At once the Convention decrees that men acting thus while in disguise shall be deemed worthy of death. A deputy named Garnier then suggests that as this is clearly a device of the infamous Pitt to increase disorder, it shall be declared lawful to murder him. Couthon, for once speaking the language of moderation, objects to this proposal as unworthy of the Republic, and moves that Pitt be declared an enemy of the human race. This is at once approved as worthy of the humanity and dignity of the Convention. The decree, then, was obviously a device for shelving the stupid and bloodthirsty motion of Garnier. The whole discussion may be compared with Pitt's declaration to the House of Commons on 12th February 1793, that the war, though undoubtedly provoked by France, would never be waged by England for motives of vengeance, but merely for the attainment of security.

Why at this time the name of Pitt should have driven the Parisian legislators half frantic is not easy to see. Up to that time the exploits of the small British force at Famars and Valenciennes had been no more than creditable; and it was not till the end of the month that the news of the entry of Admiral Hood's fleet into Toulon threw Paris into a frenzy. The decree of 9th August therefore has merely a psychological interest. When tyrants thundered at the gates of the Republic, France needed some names the mere sound of which sufficed to drive her sons to arms. In 1792 it was Brunswick or Condé. When they ceased to be effective, the populace found others first in Coburg and finally in Pitt. Other names waxed and waned; but that of the son of Chatham stood fixed in a dull haze of hatred. Thus, by a singular irony, the very man who in 1786 had branded with folly those Englishmen who declared France to be our natural enemy, was now by her banned as the enemy of the human race. And such he remains for the great majority of Frenchmen. The hasty and fortuitous phrase of Couthon, which was designed to save him from the assassin's knife, will doubtless be the permanent catchword, irremovable by research and explanation.

The ravings of the French Convention would soon have ended, had not a great organizer now appeared. On 17th August 1793 Carnot entered the Committee of Public Safety, and thenceforth wielded its limitless powers for purposes of national defence. He was an officer of engineers, and had eagerly studied the principles of strategy. Throwing himself with ardour into the Revolution, he became a member of the National Assembly, and now was charged with the supervision of the War Department. At the War Committee he had the help of officers scarcely less able. Among them Mallet du Pan, in an interesting survey of French administrators, names D'Arçon as largely contributing to the French triumphs at Dunkirk and Maubeuge. He calls him a soul on fire and full of resource.[1] But the brain and will of this Committee was Carnot. His application to work for some twelve or fourteen hours a day, his hold on masses of details, and his burning patriotism, enabled him to inflame, control, and energize Frenchmen until they became a nation in arms. Moreover, Carnot had the invaluable gift of selecting the best commanders. True, the Frenchman was not hampered by a monarch who regarded the army as his own, nor by clogging claims of seniority. The "organizer of victory" had before him a clear field and no favour.

The most urgent danger for the Republic soon proved to be not in Flanders, but in Brittany and la Vendée. There *la petite noblesse* and the peasantry still lived on friendly terms. They were alike shocked by the expulsion of the orthodox priests and the murder of the King. Summoned by the Republic to arms in the spring of 1793, they rushed to arms against her. In la Vendée.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," iii, 493.

the densely wooded district south of the lower Loire, everything favoured the defence. The hardy peasants were ably led by that born leader of men, the chivalrous Marquis de Larochejaquelein, who had inspired the men of his neighbourhood with the words: "If I advance, follow me; if I retreat, slay me; if I fall, avenge me." With him was his cousin, Lescure, not less brave, but of a cooler and more calculating temper. The ardently Catholic peasantry of the west furnished as leaders a carter, Cathelineau, of rare ability and generosity of character, and Stofflet, a gamekeeper, of stern and vindictive stamp. Nerved by fanatical hatred against the atheists and regicides of Paris, these levies of the west proved more than a match for all the National Guards, whole columns of whom they lured into the depths of the Bocage and cut down to the last man. As Victor Hugo has finely said: "It was a war of the town against the forest." At first the forest-dwellers threatened to overrun the towns. On 11th June they took Saumur, a town on the Loire, after a desperate fight, and sought to open communication with the coast and the British fleet by seizing Nantes. This attempt, however, failed; and it is generally admitted that they erred in not marching on Paris after their first successes. After gaining a sure base of operations, they should have strained every nerve in order to strike at the heart. And if distance and lack of supplies and equipment shortened their reach, they might at least have carried the war into the rich central provinces, on which the capital subsisted.

But the mistake of these poor peasants was venial when compared with those of the Allies. On the capture of Mainz, Condé, and Valenciennes, the Prussian, Austrian, and British commanders did not enforce an unconditional surrender, but offered to allow the garrisons to march out with the honours of war on condition of not serving against them for a year. A better example of shirking present problems at the cost of enhanced difficulties in the future cannot be imagined. By this improvident lenity the Allies enabled the regicides to hurl fully 25,000 trained troops against the royalists of the West and deal them terrible blows. In September and October the Republicans gained considerable successes, especially at Cholet. Soon the Vendéan War became little more than a guerilla strife, which Pitt fed by means of arms and stores, but not in the energetic manner desired by Burke and Windham.

These ardent royalists constantly pressed him to help the men of Poitou and Brittany, but had to deplore the wearisome delays which then clogged all military and naval operations. Most bitterly did Burke write to Windham, early in November 1793, that Ministers were so eager in seeking to win indemnities from France that they had hardened the national resistance of that nation, and meanwhile had not sent a single shipload of stores to the brave men of Poitou. Of course it was less easy than Burke imagined to get stores across a sea not yet fully commanded by the British fleet, and through inlets and harbours closely watched by the enemy. But the inaction of a force entrusted to the Earl of Moira for the support of the French royalists is certainly discreditable to him and to Ministers. Among them the Duke of Richmond, Master of Ordnance, distinguished himself by his incapacity and his ridiculous orders. Another obvious misfit was Lord Chatham at the Admiralty. But how can we explain the inactivity of four regiments in the Channel Islands all the summer? Surely they could have seized St. Malo or the Quiberon Peninsula.[1] Such a diversion would have been highly effective. For the Bretons and Vendéans, when supplied with arms, could have marched eastwards and roused the royalists of Normandy, Maine, and Touraine. With so potent a foe near to Paris, must not the regicides have been overborne by Coburg in Flanders? Everything tends to show that the Republicans feared the royalists of the West more than the Austrians in the North. But, as will appear in a later chapter, Pitt and Dundas decided to throw their strength into the West Indies. On 26th November 1793, Sir John Jervis sailed for that deadly bourne with 7,000 troops.

Events were soon to reveal the seriousness of this mistake. It was far more important to strike at Paris through Brittany than to occupy even the richest of the French West Indies. For a triumphant advance of the Bretons and Vendéans must not only have lessened the material resources of the Republic but also have deprived its defenders of one of their chief advantages. Hitherto the Republicans had been better massed together, while their assailants were spread over wide spaces. It is a well-known principle in war that an army operating on an inner arc, or what are termed interior lines, has a great advantage over forces spread over the outer circumference. The Allies then held the Pyrenees, the Maritime Alps, the Rhine, and most of Flanders, Brittany, and parts of the South. The defenders, possessing the central provinces, could mass their units far more quickly and choose the point on that outer curve against which they would aim their blow.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 436.

This principle was thoroughly understood by Carnot. Near the centre of the circle he massed the levies that were to save the Republic, and, confiding them to zealots who were resolved to conquer or die, he soon had on foot armies which, however contemptible as units, were formidable from their weight and their enthusiasm. As in mechanics the mass multiplied by the speed gives the effective force, so in the campaign of 1793 the *levée en masse* multiplied by enthusiasm and impelled by the brain power of Carnot begot a momentum which, when brought to bear on light, scattered, and almost stationary bodies, proved to be irresistible. For while Carnot trusted to concentration, the Allies either sank into inertia, or made ex-centric movements which ultimately played into their opponents' hands. The Prussians, after taking Mainz, did little more than rest on their laurels, their only move being towards Luxemburg. Coburg was inclined to follow their example on the ground that an advance to Paris would unite all the French parties against him, while the siege of the remaining fortresses in the North would allow anarchy to run riot at the centre.[1] The argument is a good example of political *finesse* applied to a military problem, with disastrous results. Coburg therefore set about the siege of Quesnoy.

Certainly he could urge in excuse that the British Government now insisted on the resumption of its favourite plan, the capture of that nest of privateers, Dunkirk. On receipt of the news of the surrender of Valenciennes, an order was sent to the Duke of York to begin the siege of that once important stronghold, and capture it for Great Britain, though it might be allowed finally to fall to the Emperor as one of his new Barrier fortresses, provided that we gained indemnities in other parts of the world. French and German historians, with their usual bias against Great Britain, have assumed that she had resolved to keep Dunkirk. The contrary is proved by the despatches of Dundas to Murray, and by a letter of Sir Gilbert Elliot whom Pitt appointed commissioner to regulate affairs at Dunkirk. Writing to Lady

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[1] Sybel, iii, 136, 137.

Elliot on 10th September Sir Gilbert says: "No further conquests are to be made in that quarter in the name of Great Britain, nor is it intended to retain Dunkirk after the peace."[1] A speedy capture of Dunkirk was evidently expected, for the same despatch ordered that the Hessian corps, some 8,000 strong, then with the Duke, must be held in readiness to depart to some other destination.[2] This referred either to the expedition in the Mediterranean (soon to be noticed) or to another, also in course of preparation, against Brittany. The Duke of York disapproved of the divergence towards Dunkirk, and the withdrawal of troops from his command.[3]

We here touch upon the weak side of Pitt's war policy. His aims at first had been merely to defend England from invasion, and to use the fleet and as many troops as could well be spared, to threaten various points along the coast of France and to capture her colonies. From these comparatively simple aims he had been drawn aside into a continental campaign, owing to the desirability of re-establishing Austria firmly in the Pays Bas. That is to say, a political aim drew him away from the simple and effective plan of a maritime and colonial war. Or rather it would be more correct to say that he tried to carry on a limited continental campaign as well as the coast expeditions which promised to paralyse the activities of large numbers of Frenchmen.

Accordingly, Pitt and his colleagues, instead of concentrating their activities on Flanders, prepared also to harass the coasts and colonies of France, and to withdraw part of the Duke of York's force for service in the Mediterranean or the West Indies. Instructions to this effect annoyed both the duke and Coburg. Most reluctantly did the latter consent to the divergence of the British towards Dunkirk; but, as he had already decided to spend the rest of the campaign in reducing the border fortresses, the division of forces had none of those appalling results which Alison and others have detected. The duke's corps, then, turned off to the right, and, after gaining some successes over bodies of the French, set about the siege of Dunkirk. If his siege train had arrived in time, the town would probably soon have surrendered. But now Carnot was able to utilize some of the forces raised in the *levée en masse.* By the beginning of September the French relieving army amounted to 45,000 men under General Houchard; while the Hessians and Hanoverians covering the siege operations did not exceed 9,000 men. These made a most obstinate and skilful defence in the village of Bambeke, and thereafter at Hondschoote; but the inequality of force was too great; and they were outflanked and driven back towards Furnes and Nieuport with the loss of 2,600 men (6th to 8th September). The garrison also attacked the besiegers and received much assistance from French gunboats moored near the shore. It was an unfortunate circumstance that a storm on 1st September had compelled a British frigate and a sloop to leave their moorings. Even so, the duke's force beat back their assailants into the town. But the defeat of the covering army at Hondschoote placed it between the French, the walls of Dunkirk, and the sea. Only by a speedy retreat could he save his men; and at midnight he drew off, leaving behind 32 siege guns and large quantities of stores.[1]

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[1] "Mems. of Sir G. Elliot (Earl of Minto)," ii, 159.

[2] "W. O.," 6 (10), 1st August, to Sir J. Murray, which corrects the statement in Sybel (iii, 140), that England meant to keep Dunkirk.

[3] "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 18.

At once there arose an outcry against our naval and transport authorities for not sending a squadron to cover the right flank of the Duke of York opposite Dunkirk. Elliot reports that the duke violently censured Richmond, head of the Ordnance Department, and Chatham, First Lord of the Admiralty, the latter of whom was universally allowed to be incompetent. Elliot adds: "I have seen Dundas and Pitt since the bad news. Dundas seems much dismayed. Pitt tried to carry it off better."[2] Certainly the delay in sending ships and stores was discreditable to all concerned. But the decisive action was that of Hondschoote, six miles distant from the coast, and that reverse was due to the inability of Coburg to spare the reinforcements which Murray pressed him to send. On its side the French Government was ill satisfied with the success at Hondschoote. Censuring Houchard for not pressing his advantage to the utmost and capturing the duke's whole army, it replaced him by his young and energetic subaltern, an ex-draper named Jourdan, who was destined to become one of Napoleon's marshals, while Houchard speedily went to the guillotine. By these drastic methods France found leaders who could conquer. For them the inspiring thought was—victory or the guillotine.

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[1] Calvert, 119-21.

[2] "Mems. of Sir G. Elliot," ii, 160.

The news of the failure at Dunkirk shattered Pitt's hope of a speedy end to the war. That he faced the prospect of a second campaign with his usual buoyancy appears from some notes which bear the date 16th September [1793] and are headed: "Force to be employed in Flanders, or on the coast of France in the Channel and the Ocean." He proposes to increase 9 regiments at home to 800 men apiece, to raise 8 new regiments; and these, along with Guards and troops from Ireland would number at least 20,000. He also hoped that at least 20,000 more Austrians and about 25,000 Bavarians would be available for Flanders, raising the total force in that quarter to 175,000 men.[1] These roseate views are apt to provoke derision; but we must remember that not until the close of the year 1793 did the Republic put forth her full strength and beat back her enemies at all points.

It would be tedious to follow in detail the rest of Coburg's operations in Flanders. Early in September he took Quesnoy, and then drew together his forces for the capture of the intrenched camp at Maubeuge. In this he seemed about to succeed, when Jourdan's relieving force of 60,000 men, handled by Carnot, drove the Austrians back at Wattignies with much loss, and thus saved the garrison at Maubeuge, now in dire straits. On that day, 16th October, the head of Marie Antoinette fell at Paris.

As for the Duke of York's army, after remaining in a sorry plight near Ostend, it moved forward to Quesnoy to prolong Coburg's right; but the retreat of the main body involved his retirement towards Ostend, near which town he routed some detachments of French. For a time the Allies gained a few advantages and recovered lost ground. But the Republicans more than made up for occasional losses by pouring troops into Flanders; and, moving under cover of their fortresses, they often dealt heavy blows. In quality the Austrians and British far surpassed the raw levies of France; but these, having the advantage in number and position, could take the offensive along a wide ill-defended front. Wherever Coburg and the Duke of York attacked, they gained an advantage, soon to be lost in face of the gathering masses of the enemy. As Coburg pointed out, France sent forth another horde to take the place of one which perished or melted away; and the Allies rarely had the chance of taking the offensive. By this last statement he passed sentence against himself. An able commander, even with inferior forces, will mass them so as to strike with effect. Pitt and Grenville continually pressed him to form some plan of action in conjunction with the Duke of York; but to this he as persistently demurred.[1] Is it surprising that Pitt demanded the removal of Coburg?

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[1] Pitt MSS., 196.

The Rhenish campaign, in which Austria took more interest, also languished owing to the sluggishness of the Duke of Brunswick. This, in its turn, resulted from political reasons. Frederick William, in spite of his treaty obligations to England, refused to move forward until she guaranteed his late gains in Poland and made further advances of money. Then, too, he felt no interest in Austria's proposed acquisition of parts of Alsace and Lorraine. Pitt and Grenville despatched Lord Yarmouth to the King's headquarters to make a formal protest against the proposed withdrawal of the Prussian army. Finally, Frederick William gave the order to advance, but too late to gain the results which prompt and vigorous co-operation with the Austrians should have achieved.[2] In short, the course of events in 1793 affords the classic example of the collapse of vast and imposing efforts owing to division of interests and the intrusion of jealousies and intrigues. Pitt and Grenville did their best to keep the Coalition united and active; but a Power which granted only limited help could not impart that unity of design without which great enterprises come to naught.

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[1] Vivenot, iii, 352, 353.

[2] *Ibid.*, 320, 321, 339, 379, 380; "Dropmore P.," ii, 470, 536. In the last passage Yarmouth accuses the King of Prussia of deliberately thwarting the action of the Austrian army under Wurmser.

CHAPTER VI

TOULON

> Delay leads impotent and snail-paced beggary:
> Then fiery expedition be my wing,
> Jove's Mercury, and herald for a King.
> —SHAKESPEARE, *King Richard III*, act iv, sc. 3.

THE enterprise destined to develop into the occupation of Toulon arose out of the negotiations for alliance with Austria, Sardinia, and Naples. By the first of these England pledged herself to send a considerable fleet into the Mediterranean, as an effective help to the military operations then going on in the Maritime Alps and the Genoese Riviera. Indeed, the Court of Vienna made this almost a *sine quâ non* of its alliance. On its side the British Government gained assurances of military aid from Sardinia and Naples, the former of those States agreeing to furnish 20,000 troops in return for the annual subsidy of £200,000.

Here, then, were the foundations of a Mediterranean policy on which Pitt and his colleagues began to build in the years 1793-4, with the singular and unforeseen results at Toulon and in Corsica. Everything favoured some such design. The French marine was enfeebled by mutiny, and, as the spring of 1793 merged into summer, there came ominous signs of revolt in the South against the Jacobin faction supreme at Paris. Accordingly Grenville urged the Hapsburg Court, in return for British help in Flanders, to assist an expedition of the Allies to the coast of Provence. The conduct of the Austrian Chancellor, Thugut, was characteristic. Far from strengthening the Imperial forces in Italy, he prepared to withdraw some of them for the Rhenish campaign, now that a British fleet spread its covering wings over the Kingdom of Sardinia.[1]

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 33, Grenville to Eden, 11th June; Eden to Grenville 26th June.

Nevertheless the British Ministers persevered with their scheme; but whether they at first aimed at Corsica or Toulon is uncertain.[1] Certain it is that Pitt on 19th July proposed to detach three line regiments from the Duke of York's force in Flanders and send them to the Mediterranean along with one brigade of the Hessian corps and a body of Würtembergers. He pointed out that the naval superiority of Hood and the Spanish fleet in that sea would enable us to strike a telling blow at Provence if we were helped by Sardinians, Neapolitans, and Austrians from the Milanese. He admitted the strength of the arguments in favour of our land forces acting together on one point; but he added: "What I now mention seems to offer a fair chance of doing something material in the South [of France], and, if we distress the enemy on more sides than one, while their internal distraction continues, it seems hardly possible that they can long oppose any effectual resistance."[2]

Pitt wrote thus at the time when Mainz and Valenciennes were on the point of surrender, and the Bretons, together with nearly the whole of the South of France, were in open revolt against the regicide Republic. Equally characteristic of his sanguine temperament is his Memorandum of 23rd August 1793 as to the allied forces which ought to be available for service against France in June 1794, namely, 30,000 in Flanders, while 50,000 marched thence on Paris; 50,000 to attack Brest, and as many more to attack Toulon.[3]

It so chanced that on that very day the ardour of the Provençaux brought about a very different situation. The arrival of Hood's fleet encouraged the moderates to send two Commissioners, representing the two coast Departments, to seek help from the British fleet. Thereupon on his flagship, the "Victory," Hood drew up a public Declaration that, if the ships-of-war in Toulon and Marseilles were unrigged and the French Royal standard hoisted, he would take those cities under his protection, respect private property and, on the conclusion of peace, restore the warships to the French monarchy. He then sent to a Spanish squadron, under Langara, cruising off the coast of Roussillon, with a request for help. That officer soon had the promise of 2,000 Spanish troops, to be detached from the army invading that province. The Jacobin forces under Carteaux having crushed the moderates in Marseilles, Hood made for Toulon, though as yet the Spanish ships were not in sight. He cast anchor in the outer roadstead on 27th August, and landed 1,500 men near Fort Lamalgue, east of the town. In the afternoon fifteen Spanish ships arrived, and on the next day landed 1,000 men. On the 28th Hood also issued a proclamation to the effect that he would hold Toulon in trust only for Louis XVII until peace should be restored to France.[1] To this the Toulonese assented; the opposition of some of their sailors and troops soon collapsed; and a detachment of Carteaux' force was easily dislodged from a strong position near Ollioules, north-west of the town (31st August). Toulon therefore seemed a sure gain for the royalist cause.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 392, 399, 407, 412. Spain hoped to find her "indemnity" in Corsica. See too Fortescue, iv, 116, 117.

[2] See "Eng. Hist. Rev." for October 1909, p. 748.

Pitt MSS., 196.

Yet Pitt and his colleagues were careful not to identify themselves with that cause. Hood, having implied in his Toulon proclamation that one of the objects of Great Britain was the restoration of the French monarchy, Ministers warned him that "the true ground of the war was to repel an unjust and unprovoked aggression against His Majesty, and his Allies, and the rest of Europe, which had been evidently threatened and endangered by the conduct of France." True, in the course of the struggle England had supported the French Royalists, and might find it prudent, especially in view of the events at Toulon, to assist in restoring monarchy. "But," adds Lord Chatham, "it is to be considered as arising out of the circumstances and founded on the considerations which I have stated, and not as making part of the object for which His Majesty originally took up arms."[2] This gentle rebuke to Hood (an impetuous and opinionated officer), clearly shows the attitude of the Cabinet towards that problem. For Great Britain the re-establishment of monarchy was not an affair of principle, but solely of expediency. It is also noteworthy that the inhabitants of Toulon retained the tricolour flag, thus signifying their adhesion to constitutional royalism as established in 1791.

The fortunes of the Republic now appeared desperate; and the Allies would certainly have triumphed had they put forth a tithe of the energy developed by the Jacobins at Paris. With ordinarily good management on the part of Austria, Sardinia, and Naples, Toulon might have become the centre of a great royalist movement in the South. That was certainly the expectation of Pitt; and Langara, the Spanish admiral at Toulon, expressed to his Government the hope that the war would soon end with honour.[1]

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[1] "H. O.," Adm. Medit., 1793.

[2] *Ibid*

No one at first realized the difficulties of the enterprise. The ramparts of Toulon were extensive; and the outlying forts, from Lamalgue on the east to Mount Faron on the north, and the works on the west and south-west, spread over a circumference of fully fifteen miles. Then again the French royalist committee in Toulon was somewhat suspicious of the Allies. In truth a blight seemed to settle on the royalist cause when it handed over to foreigners one of the cherished citadels of France. Loyalty to Louis XVII now spelt treason to the nation. The crisis is interesting because it set sharply against one another the principles of monarchy and nationality; and the sequel proved that the national idea, though still far from mature even in France, had more potency than royalism. A keen-sighted observer had very forcibly warned the Marseillais against delivering their city into the hands of the Spaniards, a crime which must ruin their efforts. Such was the judgement of Bonaparte in that curious pamphlet "Le Souper de Beaucaire."

Other invisible agencies, those of time and space, told against the Allies. Despatches sent by Hood were at least eleven days in reaching their destination, and often far longer. Consequently, the plans framed at home were always belated. The first tidings (received on 7th September) found the Cabinet half committed to another enterprise, that in the West Indies, which Pitt very reluctantly postponed owing to the drain of troops to Flanders and Toulon. A further disadvantage was that disputes between the British and Spanish commanders at Toulon were known at Whitehall long after they had come to a head; and the final reports of the sore straits of the garrison led to the despatch to Cork of orders for the sailing of reinforcements five days after the evacuation began at Toulon.

In these brisk and giddy-paced times it is difficult to realize the difficulties which then beset British commanders warring in the Mediterranean against an enemy who could send news to

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 28. St. Helens to Grenville, 4th and 11th September.

Paris in three days. Now the telegraph has annihilated space; but then, as in the campaigns of Francis I against Charles V, the compactness of France and her central position told enormously in her favour. The defence of Toulon was practicable, provided that adequate reinforcements arrived in time. As will soon appear, Pitt urged the despatch of strong reinforcements from Ireland; and, but for delays due to the want of transports, things might have gone very differently at Toulon. He also expected Austria to send succours if only as a means of protecting her Italian possessions. In truth, if the Hapsburgs had discerned the signs of the times, they would have taken steps to defend the Milanese at Toulon. They were destined to rue their folly.

Further, on 14th September, despite bad news from Dunkirk, Dundas issued orders that 4,000 Hessians, serving under the Duke of York, must be withdrawn in order to strengthen the garrison at Toulon, their place being taken by others hired at Cassel. On 28th September Dundas added that the artillery sent for Dunkirk would be withdrawn from Flanders as it was urgently needed at Toulon. Thus these two expeditions competed together, and produced a dislocation of plans and ordering of troops to and fro, which told against success in either quarter. By 27th October Ministers definitely decided that Toulon, or la Vendée, was a better fulcrum for their scanty forces than Flanders.[1] Even so, with all these dislocations of the Flemish plans, Pitt and Dundas relied too much upon Austria; and all too late found out that she was a broken reed. The Sardinians, also, lacking due support from the Court of Vienna, were afraid to denude their borders and therefore sent an inadequate contingent, despite the fact that they had promised to place 20,000 troops at the disposal of England free from all expense.

Far different was the procedure of the French. Carnot determined to retake Lyons and Toulon, even if the efforts against Spain and Sardinia had to be relaxed. Further, on the 16th of September there arrived at the Republican army west of Toulon the incarnation of warlike energy and skill. At the bidding of the Commissioners of the Convention, Napoleon Bonaparte had come from the arsenal at Marseilles to assist the few artillerymen then before Toulon. On the 17th he was placed in command of their insignificant siege artillery, and forthwith from the slopes two miles west of the town he opened fire on the nearest ships. It is incorrect to claim for him the origination of the plan of sinking the fleet by a fire from the height behind l'Eguilette; for three days earlier the Commissioners of the Convention had written that they would secure a position whence the allied fleet could be sunk by red-hot cannon-balls; and there was no point but the high ground behind Fort l'Eguilette which dominated both the inner and the outer harbours.[1] But it may freely be granted that Bonaparte clinched the arguments in favour of this course and brought to bear on it that masterful energy which assures triumph. It was the first occasion on which he crossed the path of Pitt; and here, as always, he had the advantage of a central position, and of wielding a compact and homogeneous force against discordant Allies.

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[1] "W. O.," 6 (10). See Fortescue (iv, pt. i, chs. vi, vii) for criticisms of these measures.

The worst difficulty confronting the defenders of Toulon remains to be noted. There the Sea Power is at the mercy of the Land Power. To attempt to defend that city at the head of its land-locked harbour, dominated by promontories, was to court disaster unless the fleet had an army to protect it. In such a case a fleet is a source of danger rather than of safety. Its true function is to act where it can, either directly or indirectly, command the land. It operates with most effect against low and exposed coasts. St. Jean d'Acre affords, perhaps, the best example of a town at the mercy of a fleet. Portsmouth, Sydney, Brest, and Toulon cannot be held by an enemy unless he brings forces sufficient to hold the neighbouring heights. In occupying Toulon, the Sea Power was virtually putting its head into the lion's jaw. Only by degrees did the authorities at home understand this all-important fact. For some time it was veiled from Pitt; and, as we shall see, the Austrian Chancellor, Thugut, never did understand it. To those who were on the spot, the need of occupying the promontory behind l'Eguilette was apparent; and on 21st September Lord Mulgrave and Rear-Admiral Gravina led a force to seize the very height on which Bonaparte's will had already fastened. The Allies crowned it with a temporary work dignified by the name of Fort Mulgrave. The fortunes

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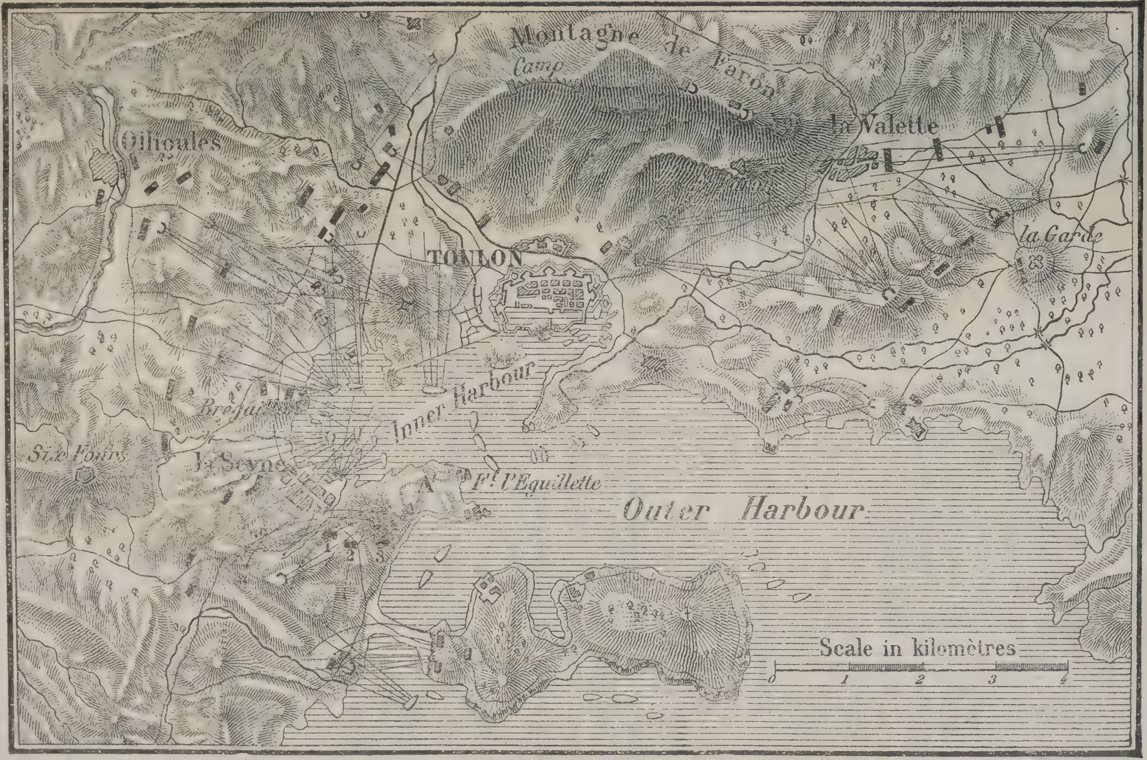
[1] The arguments of Mr. Spenser Wilkinson in "Owens College Essays," do not convince me that Napoleon alone devised that plan. Chuquet's conclusion ("Toulon," 176), "Bonaparte partageait l'avis des représentants," seems to me thoroughly sound. So, too, Cottin, "Toulon et les Anglais," ch. xi.



The Siege of Toulon, 1793, from "L'Histoire de France depuis la Révolution de 1789," by Emmanuel Toulougeon. Paris, An. XII. [1803].

A. Fort Mulgrave. A'. Promontory of L'Eguillette. 1 and 2. Batteries. 3. Battery "Hommes sans Peur." The black and shaded rectangles are the Republican and Allied positions respectively.

of Toulon turned on the possession of all the heights commanding the harbour, but especially of this one.

Even before the arrival of Bonaparte the difficulties of defence were very great. A British naval officer wrote on the 14th to Lord St. Helens, British ambassador at Madrid, that the situation of the little garrison was very critical owing to daily attacks from the 5,000 French at Ollioules and the same number on the eastern side. The Allies, he added, could not wholly trust the French royalists serving with them, and they were glad to send away on four French sail-of-the-line some 6,000 French sailors who had bargained to be landed on the Biscay coast. Having only 1,570 British and 3,460 Spaniards, they could scarcely man the ramparts and forts, several of which, especially those on Mount Faron, were not nearly ready. The houses of the town were far too near to the ramparts; but the Allies dared not demolish them until reinforcements arrived. Fortunately the Spanish Admiral, Gravina, was alert, intelligent, and trustworthy; and Piedmontese were known to be advancing over the Maritime Alps into the county of Nice. Part of Hood's fleet was engaged in intercepting the supplies and stores destined for the Republicans.[1]

The letter brings out vividly the perils of the garrison, which must have evacuated Toulon had not reinforcements speedily arrived. On 26th September Hood wrote that the Allies were kept in perpetual alarm by the French batteries, which must be kept under at all risks, until more troops arrived.[2] Fortunately the foresight of Pitt and Grenville had provided the means of backing up operations in the Mediterranean. Apart from the treaty with Sardinia, there was a compact with Naples, whereby that Court promised a force of 6,000 men and 12 warships, the naval expenses being borne by England.[3] By 5th October 1,350

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 28.

[2] "H. O." (Adm. Medit., 1793). Nevertheless Hood sent off a small squadron to offer help to Paoli in Corsica, but with very disappointing results. On 7th October he writes: "Paoli is a composition of art and deceipt [*sic*]." He also dwells on the hostile conduct of Genoa and Tuscany.

[3] Martens, v, 473-83. In "H. O.," Secrs. of State, 4, is a despatch of General Acton of 30th October 1793 to Sir W. Hamilton, stating that when transports reach Naples, they will take off 1,200 more troops for Toulon, making a total of 6,300. But ships and supplies of food were wanting. The troops must be commanded by a Neapolitan, Marshal Fortiquerri, whom Hood had censured for incompetence.

Sardinian and 4,000 Neapolitan troops arrived, thus enabling the garrison to hold up against the ever increasing forces of the Republicans. On the other hand, the fall of Lyons on 9th October set free large numbers who were available for service at Toulon. Consequently the troops and seamen of the Allies were persistently overworked, so that Hood was constrained to hire 1,500 Maltese seamen, to take the place of those serving the batteries. At first only 750 British troops could be spared from Gibraltar; but by the end of October, when further help was at hand, the allied forces (rank and file) stood as follows:

British	2,114
French Royalists	1,542
Spaniards	6,840
Neapolitans	4,832
Sardinians	1,584
	16,912

So exacting was the service, and so unhealthy the season (it cost Bonaparte a sharp attack of malarial fever), that the number fit for duty did not exceed 12,000.

It is interesting to compare these figures with the estimate of Pitt which is in the Pitt MSS. (No. 196).

September 16.

Force which it is supposed may be collected at Toulon by the end of October or early in November:

	Rank and File
British Marines	1,500
,, flank companies from Gibraltar	600
,, ,, ,, ,, Ireland	2,000[1]
,, Two battalions from Flanders (to be replaced by detachments from the Guards)	1,200
,, Cavalry from Ireland	900
Hessians from Flanders (to be replaced by the additional corps ordered)	5,000
Spanish (suppose)	3,000
Neapolitan	6,000
Sardinian	9,000
Austrian	5,000
Total	33,200
	[*sic*—really 34,200.]

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[1] On 15th September Pitt wrote to the Earl of Westmorland, Viceroy of

> This Force may be estimated (allowing for some deduction) at 30,000 men. To this may possibly be added some Force from Corsica, and probably early in the spring, an additional body of 11,000 Sardinians, perhaps also of 10,000 Austrians, and some troops of Baden from hence. Possibly also a body of Swiss, and in the course of the next summer (if the expedition to the West Indies is successful) about 4,000 or 5,000 British on their return from the Islands. If 10,000, or 12,000, Swiss can be secured, it seems not unreasonable to expect that, by the beginning of next year, there may be an army in the South of France of near 60,000 men.

Pitt, then, regarded Toulon as the base of operations in the South of France so extensive as to deal a decisive blow at the Republic. The scheme was surely due to the influence of Bacchus rather than of Mars. For how was it possible to spare 6,200 men from the Duke of York's force, then hard pressed after its retreat from Dunkirk? The estimate of the Sardinian contingent was based on the treaty obligations of that Power rather than on probable performance; while that for the Spaniards is strangely beneath the mark. How boyishly hopeful also to suppose that the British forces destined for the future conquest of Corsica could spare a contingent for service in Provence in the spring of 1794, and that the nervous little Court of Turin would send an *additional* body of 11,000 men far into France. Thus early in Pitt's strategic combinations we can detect the vitiating flaw. He did not know men, and therefore he did not know Cabinets. He believed them to be acting according to his own high standard of public duty and magnanimous endeavour. Consequently he never allowed for the calculating meanness which shifted the burdens on to other shoulders.

The one factor on which he had a right to count was the despatch of a respectable force of Austrians from the Milanese by way of Genoa. The Austrian Governor of Milan promised to

Ireland, asking him to send the flank companies (the best men) of the regiments then in Ireland. Westmorland agreed on 18th September, but said they could not sail in less than three weeks. As the crisis at Toulon deepened, Pitt, about the middle of November, begged the Lord Lieutenant to send the 35th, 41st, and 42nd regiments from Ireland to Toulon. On 20th November Westmorland agreed (though pointing out the danger of an Irish rising). On the 30th he said the two latter regiments were ready to sail from Cork whenever the transports should arrive; but the delays in the arrival and sailing of transports had always been serious—a prophetic remark (Pitt MSS., 331).

send 5,000 men; but not a man ever stirred.[1] Hood did not hear this disappointing news till 24th November.[2] He at once sent off to London an urgent request for succour; and orders were given *on 23rd December* (the day after the arrival of the news) for three regiments to sail from Cork for his relief. Thus it came about that 12,000 Allies were left unsupported at Toulon to bear the brunt of attacks of some 40,000 Frenchmen now directed by a genius. O'Hara, who took over the command on his arrival on 27th October, at once gave a verdict consonant with his pessimistic character. Hood wrote on the morrow to Dundas: "General O'Hara has just been with me and alarmed me much. He says our posts are not tenable and that we are in a dangerous situation for lack of troops that can be relied upon. And, what is very unpleasant, is the conduct of the Spaniards, who are striving for power here." On 11th November O'Hara reported that, in the absence of engineer officers, the forts had been injudiciously constructed; that their garrisons began to suffer from exposure to the bleak weather; that the broken and wooded country greatly favoured the advance of the enemy, and hampered all efforts to dislodge him; that the Spaniards and Sardinians had no artillery, tools, or camp equipments; and that the only means of securing Toulon was to have an army capable of taking the field.[3] Hood and he therefore counted the hours for the arrival of 5,000 Austrians from Genoa, and of troops from England.

The difficulties of the Allies were enhanced by the disputes which soon arose between the British and Spaniards as to the command of the garrison. The tactful Gravina having been badly wounded in driving the French from Mount Faron, Langara put in a claim that his successor should be commander-in-chief of the allied forces (23rd October). To this Hood stoutly demurred, on the ground that he received Toulon in trust before the Spaniards appeared; and, though it was true that the Spanish troops outnumbered the British, yet the command of the Neapolitan and Sardinian contingents belonged of right to the subsidizing Power. He therefore claimed the supreme command for General O'Hara. This matter caused much annoyance at Madrid, where that rankling sore, Nootka Sound, was still kept open by the all-powerful Minister, Alcudia. Hood's testiness increased the friction at Toulon. The Spaniards were justified in claiming equality at that fortress; for only by their arrival did the position become tenable; and the joint proclamations of Hood and Langara formed a tacit admission of that equality. But Pitt early resolved to take a firm stand on this subject. On 17th October, in discussing the instructions for Sir Gilbert Elliot, the British Commissioner designated for Toulon, he declared that we must appoint him governor of that town in consequence of its surrender to us.[1]

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 471. Thugut took no interest whatever in Toulon (see Vivenot, iii, 324, 327, 362, 363). Other proofs follow (pp. 381, 384) of the pressing demands which Grenville, also Mr. Trevor at Turin, made for the fulfilment of the Emperor's promise. Some difficulties supervened as to the provisioning of the 5,000 Austrian troops on the march and the place of embarkation; but these were far from insuperable. Clearly the operating cause was Thugut's conviction that there was at Toulon a number of troops "excédant ce que toute place quelconque peut exiger pour sa défense" (*ibid.*, 385).

[2] "H. O." (Adm. Medit., 1793), Hood to Dundas, 24th November.

[3] *Ibid.* O'Hara to Hood. This reached London on 8th December; but, as we have seen, Ministers up to 22nd December continued to rely on the arrival of the Austrians as providing a sufficient reinforcement.

Pitt kept up this stiff attitude, and on 30th November stated to St. Helens that, as Toulon surrendered to Hood alone (Langara having declined to share in the original enterprise) England must appoint the commander-in-chief, especially as she could not transfer to a Spaniard the command of her subsidized Allies. The despatch concluded thus: "His Majesty has in no case any view upon that place different from that which has been avowed in his name—that at the conclusion of peace that port should be restored to the crown of France and that in the interval it should serve in His Majesty's hands as a means of carrying on the war and as a pledge of indemnity to him and his Allies, including the Crown of Spain, whose claim to indemnity His Majesty has so distinctly avowed."[2]

These words were added because the French Royalists and the Spaniards asserted that England's high-handed conduct at Toulon arose from her resolve to make of it a second Gibraltar. The insinuation struck home then, and has been widely repeated.[3] But, on the first receipt of the news of the gain of Toulon, Grenville declared explicitly to the Austrian Court "that whatever indemnification is to be acquired by this country must be looked for in the foreign settlements and colonies of France."[1] As we shall see in later chapters, Corsica and the French West Indies were the acquisitions aimed at by the Pitt Ministry.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 447; "Mems. of Sir G. Elliot," ii, 190, *et seq.*

[2] "F. O.," Spain, 28.

[3] Even by M. Cottin in his works, "Toulon et les Anglais," "L'Angleterre et les Princes."

Some colour was given to this charge by the refusal of the British Government to allow the Comte de Provence, the *soi-disant* Regent of France, to proceed to Toulon. Grenville even instructed Francis Drake, our envoy at Genoa, to prevent him embarking at that port. At first sight this conduct seems indefensible, especially as the Court of Madrid favoured the Prince's scheme. It must be remembered, however, that the British Government had consistently refused to acknowledge the Prince as Regent, and was now exceedingly annoyed with him for announcing his resolve to go to Toulon, without first applying for permission to George III.[2] This violation of etiquette prejudiced his case from the outset. Further, the Royalists of Toulon had declared for Louis XVII, and a majority of them throughout France opposed the claim of "Monsieur" to the Regency. The constitution of 1791 gave him no such right on his own initiative; and, as Toulon stood for that constitution, not for the "pure" royalism which he now championed, his arrival would place the garrison "at the discretion of wild and hot-headed emigrants and expose them to the reproaches and discontents of the Regent's Court."[3] Besides, what could the Regent of France do in Toulon, a town closely besieged and in danger of being taken? His dignity and influence would be far better maintained by remaining at large than by proceeding thither.[4]

Finally, the two princes had given no assurance or promise that they would recognize the claims of the Allies to indemnities from France for the expenses of the war.[5] On this last matter the *émigrés* were beginning to raise shrill protests at London; and it was certainly wise to come to some understanding with the princes on this point before they were put in possession of Provence. Pitt and Grenville were not made of the same stuff as the Ministers in power in 1815, who demanded no return for the sacrifices of blood and treasure in the Waterloo campaign. None the less, it is certain that Pitt and his cousin had no thought of keeping either Dunkirk or Toulon, save as a pledge for the acquisition of some of the French West Indies and Corsica.[1] This was hinted at plainly in the British Declaration issued at Toulon on 20th November:

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 34. Grenville to Eden, 7th September. So in his lette. of 4th October to Pitt he refers to "such other towns or districts [in S. France] as may become objects of indemnity." See, too, "Dropmore P.," ii, 412, 438; Vivenot, iii, 326.

[2] "Dropmore P.," iii, 487.

[3] "H. O.," 455, *ad fin.*

[4] "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 33.

[5] "F. O.," Spain, 28. Grenville to St. Helens, 22nd October 1793. Cottin omits this despatch, which is essential to the understanding of British policy. See for further details C. J. Fox, "Bonaparte at the Siege of Toulon," bk. ii, ch. ii.

> That altho' at the conclusion of peace, we shall think ourselves entitled to stipulate such terms as may afford just security to ourselves and our Allies, and a reasonable indemnification for the risks and expenses of a war in which, without any provocation on our part, we have been compelled to engage, yet that, for our part our views of indemnification can only have relation to places not on the Continent of Europe.

After this explicit statement, there ought to have been no bickerings about British aggrandisement at Toulon. Some of the hot-heads in that town (echoed by Fox later on at Westminster) chose to consider the Declaration as an infraction of Hood's promise that he would hold Toulon merely in trust for Louis XVII. The difference, however was not vital. Pitt and Grenville intended to hold Toulon merely as a pledge that the British claims to an indemnity elsewhere would be satisfied. Spain had most cause for annoyance with the Declaration, inasmuch as she, though having a superior number of troops in that town, was neither allowed to consider it as a pledge for her future indemnities, nor to share in its government. It was confided to three Commissioners—Sir Gilbert Elliot, Hood, and O'Hara, Elliot being virtually Governor.

In one other matter the Courts of St. James and of Madrid were at variance. The latter urged the need of speedily removing the French warships from Toulon to a Spanish port, or of making preparations for burning them. Whereas Pitt, who regarded Toulon, not as a windfall, but as a base of operations for a campaign in Provence, maintained that such conduct must blight their prospects. With phenomenal stupidity, Langara allowed his secret instructions on this topic to leak out, thereby rousing the rage of the Toulonese and the contempt of his British colleagues. The Duke of Alcudia (better known as Godoy) expressed sincere regret for this *bêtise*. But the mischief was done. The French royalists thenceforth figured as traitors who had let in a band of thieves intent only on the seizure of the French warships.

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 28. On 30th November Grenville instructed St. Helens to express regret that Spain seemed to retract her wish, previously expressed, that Corsica should go to England; and also to advise that Spain should take her indemnity from France on the Pyrenean frontier.

As if this were not enough, Hood quarrelled with our military officers, with results highly exasperating to our land forces.[1] These last did not shine during the siege. True, in the sortie of 29th November they captured a battery recently erected north of Malbosquet; but, their eagerness exceeding their discipline, they rushed on, despite orders to remain in the battery, like a pack of hounds after a fox (wrote Hood);[2] whereupon the French rushed upon them, driving them back with heavy loss. O'Hara, while striving to retrieve the day, was wounded and captured. His mantle of gloom devolved upon Major-General David Dundas, a desponding officer, who had recently requested leave to return on furlough on the ground of ill health and inability to cope with the work. This general's letters to his ever confident relative, Henry Dundas, at Whitehall, were always in a minor key. In his eyes the Spanish troops were "everything that is bad"; half of the Toulonese were hostile to the Allies; and the latter were heavily handicapped by having to defend their own fleets. There was some truth in this; but the whining tone of the letters, due to ill health, drew from the Minister a stinging retort, to the effect that the occupation of Toulon had taken Ministers wholly by surprise; that they had done their best to comply with the new demands for troops, and expected their general not to look at his own difficulties alone, but to remember those of the enemy and endeavour to beat him.[3]

This was the spirit in which Hood faced the problem. Even at the close of November, when all hope of the arrival of the 5,000 Austrians was past, he refused to listen to David Dundas's advice for the evacuation of Toulon; and surely this pertinacity was consonant with the traditions of the British navy, and of the army in its better days; but out of this question arose a feud between army and navy which developed in Corsica with disastrous results. Ministers strove to send all the succour available. But they did not hear until 22nd December that the 5,000 Austrians were being withheld. Henry Dundas's letter of the 28th also breathes deep concern at the news that Sir R. Boyd had not forwarded from Gibraltar the reinforcements ordered thence. Further, it appears from an official estimate drawn up at Whitehall on 18th December, that the troops already at or ordered to Toulon were believed to be as follows: British, 2,828; Spanish, 4,147; Sardinians, 2,162; Neapolitans, 8,600. Dundas also included the 1,100 British troops ordered from Gibraltar (where at that time there was no chance of an attack), and 2,361 men under directions to sail from Cork, but which could not stir owing to the non-arrival of the transports.[1] The resulting total of 21,198 is, of course, merely a sign of Henry Dundas's optimism. But obviously Ministers were unaware of the acute crisis at Toulon at the time of its surrender. In the age of telegraphy, that disaster would have been averted. The delays of the Austrians, and the muddles at Gibraltar and Cork, would have been known betimes.

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[1] Fortescue, iv, 172.

[2] "H. O.," Adm. Medit., 1793.

[3] "H. O.," Mil., 455. Fortescue (iv, 175) vehemently censures Henry Dundas, but I think without sufficient ground. The letters of David Dundas called for reproof. See Mr. Oscar Browning's "Youth of Napoleon" (App. iv).

Strange to say, there was at that time lying at anchor at Spithead a force under Lord Moira's command, destined for Brittany, but held back for various causes, which would probably have turned the balance at Toulon, had Ministers known of the dire need of reinforcements. It is mortifying to read the letters of Pitt and the Marquis of Buckingham early in December, complaining that Moira's force is strangely inactive.[2] Still more startling is it to read the hurried order of 23rd December (six days after the loss of Toulon), that the 40th regiment, then unexpectedly detained at Cork, though detached for service with Lord Moira, should set sail at once for the French stronghold along with the other regiments also detained at Cork.[3] What might not have happened, had those troops set sail for Toulon before the close of November?

Hero-worshippers will probably maintain that, even if Toulon had been held harmoniously by all the troops which the imagination of Pitt and Dundas conjured up, nevertheless the genius and daring of the little Corsican would have prevailed. This view is tenable; but the prosaic mind, which notes the venturesome extension of Bonaparte's batteries in November—December, until they presented their right flanks to the cliffs and their rear to the open sea, though at too high a level to be cannonaded, will probably conclude that, if Hood and Langara had had a force of 20,000 men, they could have driven the French from those works. As it was, the Allies, not having enough men, stood on the defensive all along their very extensive front, and were overpowered at Fort Mulgrave, which was some miles away from the city. Its garrison of 700 men (British, Spanish, and a few Neapolitans) was assailed in the stormy night of 16th-17th December by 7,000 of the best of the Republican troops. The ensuing conflict will best be understood from the hitherto unpublished account given by the commander-in-chief. After describing the heavy cannonade from three French batteries against Fort Mulgrave, he continues thus:

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[1] Pitt MSS., 331; "H. O.," Mil., 455.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 476, 477; "Mems. of Sir G. Elliot," ii, 198.

[3] Admiralty. Out Letters, xiii.

> H.M.S. "Victory," Hières Bay, Dec. 21, 1793.[1]
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> . . . The works suffered much. The number of men killed and wounded was considerable. The weather was rainy and the consequent fatigue great. At 2 a.m. of the 17th, the enemy, who had every advantage in assembling and suddenly advancing, attacked the fort in great force. Although no part of this temporary post was such as could well resist determined troops, yet for a considerable time it was defended; but, on the enemy entering on the Spanish side, the British quarter, commanded by Captain Conolly of the 18th regiment, could not be much longer maintained, notwithstanding several gallant efforts were made for that purpose. It was therefore at last carried, and the remains of the garrison of 700 men retired towards the shore of Balaguier, under the protection of the other posts established on those heights, and which continued to be faintly attacked by the enemy. As this position of Balaguier was a most essential one for the preservation of the harbour, and as we had no communication with it but by water, 2,200 men had been placed there for some time past. On the night preceding the attack, 300 more men had been sent over, and on the morning of the 17th, 400 were embarked still further to support it.
>
> When the firing at Balaguier ceased, we remained in anxious suspense as to the event, till a little before daylight, when a new scene opened by an attack on all our posts on Mt. Pharon. The enemy were repulsed on the east side, where was our principal force of about 700 men, com

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[1] "H. O.," Mil., 455.

> manded by a most distinguished officer, the Piedmontese Colonel, de Jermagnan, whose loss we deeply lament; but on the back of the mountain—near 1,800 feet high, steep, rocky, deemed almost inaccessible, and which we had laboured much to make so—they found means once more to penetrate between our posts, which occupied an extent of above two miles, guarded by about 450 men; and in a very short space of time we saw that with great numbers they crowned all that side of the mountain which overlooks the town.

In this despatch David Dundas proclaimed his own incompetence. For some time it had been obvious that the Republicans were about to attack Fort Mulgrave, which everybody knew to be essential to the defence of the fleet. Yet he took no steps to strengthen this "temporary post" so that it might resist a determined attack. He also entrusted one half of the battery to the Spaniards whom he had declared to be "everything that is bad." On his own showing, as many as 2,500 allied troops were near at hand on the Balaguier or Eguilette heights to act as supports, before Bonaparte's attack began; and 400 more were sent thither soon afterwards. A spirited attack by those troops on the victors at Fort Mulgrave on its blind side might have retrieved the day; but a panic seized part of the supports, whom Sidney Smith describes as rushing like swine towards the sea though the enemy was only in a condition to attack "faintly." Hood was furious at this spiritless acceptance of defeat; and in his despatch to Whitehall censured the troops for not making a timely effort;[1] but as David Dundas had all along opined that the place was untenable, he decided to hold a council of war. It registered the wishes of the desponding chief. The officers decided that it was impossible either to retake the two positions lost, or to establish a post on the outer, or Cepet, peninsula, capable of protecting the roadstead from the cross fires which the French would pour in from the Balaguier and Cape Brun promontories.

During the next three days the evacuation took place amidst scenes of misery for the royalist refugees that baffle the imagination. As many as 14,877 were crowded on board the British ships, together with some 8,000 troops. At the same time Captains Sidney Smith, Hare, and Edge, with a picked body of men burnt or otherwise damaged 27 French warships left in the harbour, while 18 were brought away by the Allies. Eleven of the twenty-seven were not seriously injured by the fire, and they afterwards flew the tricolour. But the loss of 34 warships and nearly all the masts and other valuable stores was a blow from which the French navy did not recover until Bonaparte before his Egyptian expedition breathed his own matchless vigour into the administration. In ships and stores, then, France suffered far more heavily than the Allies. Their losses elude the inquiries of the statistician. They consisted in the utter discredit of the royalist cause throughout France, the resentment that ever follows on clumsy or disloyal co-operation, and the revelation of the hollowness of the imposing fabric of the First Coalition. In the south of France four nations failed to hold a single fortress which her own sons had placed in their power.

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[1] "H. O.," Adm. Medit., 1794.

The Nemesis which waits upon weakness and vacillation has rarely appeared in more mocking guise than at the close of the year 1793. About the time when Toulon surrendered, the Austrian Government finally came to the determination to despatch thither the 5,000 men which it had formerly promised to send. Grenville received this news from Eden in the first days of 1794, shortly after the surrender of the fortress was known. Thereupon he penned these bitter words: "If the first promise had been fulfilled agreeably to the expectation which His Majesty was justified in forming, the assistance of such a body of disciplined troops would have sufficed to ensure the defence of that important post; and the injury which the common cause has sustained on this occasion can be ascribed only to the tardiness and indecision which so strongly characterize the Austrian Government."[1] Most tactfully he bade Eden refrain from reproaches on this occasion and to use it merely as an argument for throwing greater vigour into the next campaign.

Events pointed the moral far more strongly than Eden could do. As by a lightning flash, the purblind politicians of Vienna could now discern the storm-wrack drifting upon them. The weakness of the Piedmontese army, their own unpreparedness in the Milanese, the friendliness of Genoa to France, and the Jacobinical ferment in all parts of Italy, portended a speedy irruption of the Republicans into an almost defenceless land where they were sure of a welcome from the now awakened populace.

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 36. Grenville to Eden, 3rd January 1794.

So long as Toulon held out, Piedmont and Milan were safe. Now, the slackness of Austria enabled her future destroyer to place his foot on the first rung of the ladder of fame, and prompted those mighty plans for the conquest of the Italian States which were to ensure her overthrow and his supremacy.

Well might Eden dwell on the consternation prevalent at Vienna early in 1794. For, along with news of the loss of Toulon, tidings of defeat and retreat came from the Rhineland. Able and vigorous young generals, Hoche and Pichegru, had beaten back Austrians and Prussians from the hills around Wörth and Weissenburg; so that the Allies fell back with heavy losses towards the Rhine. Thus, on the whole, the efforts of Austria, Great Britain, Prussia, Holland, and some of the smaller German States had availed merely to capture four fortresses, Mainz, Condé, Valenciennes, and Quesnoy. It is not surprising that public opinion in England, even in loyal circles, became clamorous against the conduct of the war.[1]

Not the least of the misfortunes attending the Toulon episode was that the logic of events, and also the growing savagery of the Reign of Terror, edged Pitt away from his standpoint of complete neutrality as to the future government of France. How could the ally of the Toulonese Royalists profess indifference on that topic? On 5th October he wrote as follows to Grenville respecting the powers to be granted to Sir Gilbert Elliot at Toulon:

> I do not see that we can go on secure grounds if we treat with any separate districts or bodies of men [in France] who stop short of some declaration in favour of monarchy: nor do I see any way so likely to unite considerable numbers in one vigorous effort as by specifying monarchy as the only system in the re-establishment of which we are disposed to concur. This idea by no means precludes us from treating with any other form of regular Government, if, in the end, any other should be solidly established; but it holds out monarchy as the only one from which we expect any good, and in favour of which we are disposed to enter into concert.[2]

These words are remarkable. Clearly, in Pitt's view of things, "security" for England and Holland was the paramount aim; but he was beginning to feel that the Republican groups which scrambled to power at Paris over the headless trunks of their enemies, could offer no adequate security. When the Revolution began to solidify, as it seemed about to do in 1795-7, he was willing to treat with its chiefs; but already he was feeling the horns of the dilemma, which may be described in words adapted from Talleyrand's famous *mot* of the year 1814: "Either the Bourbons or the Republic: everything else is an intrigue." The Toulon episode, more than anything else, bound France to the regicide cause, and Pitt, albeit unwillingly, to the irreconcilable Royalists. Thus the event which brought Bonaparte to the front, shattered the aim of the Prime Minister to effect merely the restoration of the Balance of Power.

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[1] Pellew, "Sidmouth," i, 112.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 438.

CHAPTER VII

THE BRITISH JACOBINS

The much better way doubtless will be, in this wavering condition of our affairs, to defer the changing or circumscribing of our Senate more than may be done with ease till the Commonwealth be thoroughly settled in peace and safety.—MILTON, *A Free Commonwealth.*

But cease, ye fleecing Senators
Your country to undo,
Or know, we British *sans-culottes*
Hereafter may fleece you.
THELWALL, *A Shearing Song.*

THE outbreak of hostilities often tends to embitter the strife of parties. Those who oppose war find abundant cause for criticism in the conduct of Ministers, who in their turn perforce adopt measures alien to the traditions of Westminster. A system founded on compromise cannot suddenly take on the ways of a military State; and efforts in this direction generally produce more friction than activity. At such times John Bull, flurried and angry, short-sighted but opinionated, bewildered but dogged as ever, is a sight to move the gods to laughter and his counsellors to despair.

The events of the session of 1793 illustrate my meaning. In view of the notorious sympathy of the Radical Clubs with France, Pitt proposed a Bill against Traitorous Correspondence with the enemy. Both he and Burke proved that the measure, far from being an insidious attack on the liberties of the subject, merely aimed at enforcing "the police of war." Nevertheless, it passed only by a majority of one—a warning to the Ministry not to proceed further in that doubtful course (9th April 1793) Pitt had the full support of the House in opposing Grey's motion for Parliamentary Reform, which was thrown out by 282 votes to 41. The war spirit also appeared in a sharp rebuff given to Wilberforce and the Abolitionists on 14th May. The institution of a Board of Agriculture (which Hussey, Sheridan, and Fox opposed as a piece of jobbery) and the renewal of the Charter of the East India Company were the chief practical results of that session. But the barrenness of the session, the passing of the Traitorous Correspondence Bill, and the hardships connected with the balloting for the militia stirred the Radical Clubs to redoubled energy; so that home affairs for two or three years centred in their propaganda and in Pitt's repressive efforts. The development of a keen political consciousness in the masses is a subject of so much interest that I may be pardoned for dwelling on it somewhat fully, with the aid of new materials drawn from the Home Office Archives.

There we see the causes of unrest. Hunger, hatred of the militia laws, chafing against restraints entailed by the war, all conduce to discontent. The newly awakened Caliban is also a prey to suspicion. He hates foreigners. Yet, either as refugees or prisoners, they swarm along the south coast (there were for a time 5,000 prisoners in Winchester). Fishermen are tempted to help in their escape, and a mariner of Emsworth is arraigned for treason on this count. Even so far west as Bodmin the prisoners are numerous and threatening. They convince many of the townsfolk that England would be better off as a Republic; and two patriotic ladies in fear and horror inform Lord Mount Edgcumbe anonymously that Frenchmen cut a mark round the neck of King George on all coins. The vicar of Ringmer, near Lewes, reports that the smugglers of the Sussex coast carry on a regular intercourse with France. In the Isle of Wight even the French royalists, who are there awaiting the despatch of Lord Moira's long-deferred expedition to Brittany, figure as murderous Jacobins. In Bath, too, the mayor, Mr. Harington, is troubled by the influx of Gallic artists and dancing-masters, especially as they mix in all the "routs," and dare even there to whisper treason against King George. Another report comes that a French usher in a large school near London—was it Harrow?—has converted several of the boys to republicanism. Clearly, these are cases for the Aliens Act.

Even Britons, untainted by Gallic connections, are suspect. At Billingsgate a soldier swears that he was set upon at night because he wore the uniform of "a d——d tyrant"; and other evidence proves that the service was unpopular for political reasons as well as the poor pay. Farmers are plied by emissaries of the clubs as they come in to market. Complaints come to Dundas that farmers and shippers on the coasts of Lancashire and Cumberland sell corn to "the natural enemy."

The discontent takes colour from its surroundings. At Pocklington in Yorkshire the villagers threaten to burn the magistrates in their houses in revenge for the conviction of poachers. The rowdies of Olney in Bucks. (formerly a sore trial to Cowper and John Newton) terrorize the neighbourhood. Everywhere the high price of corn produces irritation. The tinworkers of North Cornwall march in force to Padstow to prevent the exportation of corn from that little harbour; otherwise they are law-abiding, though a magistrate warns Dundas that local malcontents are setting them against the Government. Multiply these typical cases a thousand fold, and it will be seen that the old rural system is strained to breaking point. The amenities of the rule of the squires are now paid back, and that, too, at a time when England needs one mind, one heart, one soul. At and near Sheffield serious riots break out owing to the enclosures of common-fields and wastes, the houses of the agricultural "reformers" being burnt or wrecked. On the whole, however, I have found fewer references to enclosures than might be expected.[1]

As generally happens in times of excitement, the towns are the first to voice the dumb or muttering hatreds of the villages. Parisians led the Revolution in France, though its causes lay thickest and deepest in the rural districts. Not until Paris "stormed" its castle did the villagers attack theirs. So, too, in the muffled repetition of the revolutionary music which England sounds forth, the towns buzz, while the country supplies but a dull ground-tone. Dearness of food and scarcity of work were the chief causes of discontent. The spokesmen for the Spitalfields weavers, who number 14,000, sent up a temperate petition setting forth their distress; but, as is often the case in London, their thoughts turned not to politics, but to practical means of cure. They stated that the trade in velvets, brocades, and rich silks would be absolutely ruined unless steps were taken to revive the fashion in these fabrics. In Liverpool there were far other grievances. There, as in all seaports, the tyranny of the press-gang was sharply resented; and, early in November 1793, the populace clamoured for the election of a "liberty-loving mayor,"

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[1] See "The Complaints of the Poor People of England," by G. Dyer, B.A. (late of Emmanuel College, Camb., 1793).

Mr. Tarleton, who promised to keep the press-gang out of the town.[1]

In general the malcontents urged their case most pointedly in towns and villages, where branches of the Radical Societies had taken root. These Societies or clubs continued to grow in number and influence through the year 1793, the typical club being now concerned, not with faro, but with the "Rights of Man." Some of the Reform Clubs sought to moderate the Gallicizing zeal of the extreme wing. Thus, the "Friends of the People," whose subscription of two and a half guineas was some guarantee for moderation, formally expressed their disapproval of Paine's works and all Republican agencies—a futile declaration; for his "Rights of Man" was the very life-blood of the new clubs. Working men had shown little or no interest in the earlier motions for Reform. The Associations of the years 1780-5 had lapsed; and it was clearly the joint influence of the French Revolution and Paine's productions which led to the remarkable awakening of the year 1792.

Besides the London Corresponding Society, started (as we saw in Chapter III) by Thomas Hardy early in that year, there was another formidable organization, the Society for Constitutional Information, founded in London at the close of 1791. It, too, was concerned with much more than the Reform of Parliament; for on 18th May 1792 it recommended the publication in a cheap form of Paine's "Rights of Man"; and on 21st November it appointed a Committee for Foreign Correspondence. A little later were adopted some of the phrases used in the French Convention, and St. André, Roland, and Barrère were admitted to membership. It does not appear that either this Society, or Hardy's, corresponded with France after the declaration of war; for the Parliamentary Committee of Secrecy, charged in 1794 to report on seditious proceedings would, if it were possible, have fastened on so compromising an act. Its members belonged to a higher class than those of Hardy's Society; for they included Romney the painter, Holcroft the dramatist, Horne Tooke, the humorous *littérateur*, and Thelwall, the ablest lecturer of the day.[2] That these men had advanced far beyond the standpoint of the Whiggish "Friends of the People," appears from a letter from one of the Norwich Radical Clubs to the London Corresponding Society:

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 27, 28.

[2] E. Smith, "The English Jacobins," 111-3; C. Cestre, "John Thelwall" ch. ii.

> The Friends of the People mean only a partial Reform, because they leave out words expressing the Duke of Richmond's plan and talk only of a Reform; while the Manchester people seem to intimate, by addressing Mr. Paine, as though they were intent upon Republican principles only. Now, to come closer to the main question, it is only desired to know whether the generality of the Societies mean to rest satisfied with the Duke of Richmond's plan only, or whether it is their private design to rip up monarchy by the roots and place democracy in its stead.[1]

These Societies seem to have put forth no definite programme. Their defenders claimed that they adhered to the Westminster programme of 1780, championed by Fox and the Duke of Richmond. But Fox strongly disapproved of their aims, and even refused to present their petition for annual parliaments and universal suffrage.[2] In truth, the actions of these bodies belied their words. They largely devoted their funds and their energies to the circulation in a cheap form of the works of Paine, 200,000 copies being sold in 1793,[3] and still more in the following year. The Societies also adopted methods of organization similar to those of the French Jacobins Club, and advocated the assembly of a representative Convention. Every sixteen members of the London Corresponding Society could form a division; and the divisions, by the process of swarming-off, rapidly extended the organization. They also sent delegates who conferred on matters of importance, either locally or at headquarters; and the head delegation finally claimed to represent very large numbers in London and affiliated centres. In the conduct of details Spartan self-restraint was everywhere manifest. Members were urged to be brief in their remarks and business-like in their methods. Officials must give a solemn promise not to skulk, or make off, owing to persecution; and members were warned that noisy declamation was not a proof of zeal but might be a cloak for treachery. Above the chairman's seat was suspended a card with the words—"Beware of Orators." One would like to have witnessed the proceedings of these dully earnest men.

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[1] "Report of the Committee of Secrecy," May 1794. The Duke of Richmond's plan was the Westminster programme of 1780, which became the "six points" of the Charter of 1838.

[2] See Fox's letter of 2nd May 1793 to Hardy in "State Trials," xxiv, 791.

[3] M. Conway, "Life of T. Paine," i, 346.

Both in the provinces and in London, reformers of the old type sought to curb the more dangerous of these developments, especially correspondence with the Jacobins' Club at Paris. Thus, the Manchester Constitutional Society having published its address of congratulation to that body, together with the reply of Carras, a member, George Lloyd, entered a formal protest in these terms: "We are not a Republican Society; but from such connection and correspondence we shall involve ourselves in the imputation of Republicanism." He added that their aim was solely the Reform of Parliament, and with that foreigners had no concern whatever.[1] Nevertheless the Society kept up its foreign correspondence, and received addresses from Jacobin Clubs in France.

Another threatening symptom was the attempt to excite discontent among the soldiery. There being then very few barracks, the men were quartered on the public houses; and several petitions were sent to Whitehall by publicans (sometimes even by Corporations), pointing out the many inconveniences of this custom. Thus in the autumn of 1793 the publicans of Winchester complained that they had had to lodge as many as 5,000 men during their passage through that city, besides the Bucks. regiment stationed there, and they begged that barracks might be built. The authorities paid the more heed to these petitions because local malcontents "got at" the soldiery in the taverns, and brought home to them their grievances, namely, poor pay, insufficient allowance for food at its enhanced prices, and the severities of discipline exercised by "effeminate puppies" drawn from aristocratic circles. In particular they circulated a pamphlet—"The Soldiers' Friend: or Considerations on the late pretended Augmentation of the Subsistence of the Private Soldiers"—pointing out the close connection between the officers and "the ruling faction," which "ever must exist while we suffer ourselves to be governed by a faction."

When the war with France unexpectedly lengthened out, the Ministry decided to erect new barracks, accommodating 34,000 men, at a total expense of about £1,400,000. In the debate of 8th April 1796, Fox and General Smith savagely assailed this proceeding as fatal to English liberty. "Good God!" exclaimed Smith, "is every town to be made a citadel and every village converted into a garrison?" Windham had little difficulty in showing that the old barracks were in general badly situated, and not adapted for cavalry. Buildings for the use of 5,400 horsemen were now erected; and on the whole question he asserted that the men would live more cheaply, and would contract less vicious habits than when lodged in inns. Above all, they would be removed from the sedition-mongers, who now plied them with doctrines destructive alike of loyalty and military discipline. Windham then quoted a phrase from Molière's "Médecin malgré lui": "If I cannot make him dumb, I will make you deaf."[1] The inference was that the inability of the Cabinet to silence malcontents involved the expenditure of £1,400,000 partly in order to stop the ears of the soldiery.

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[1] In the Place MSS. (Brit. Mus.), vol. entitled "Libel, Sedition, Treason, Persecution"—a valuable collection.

Lord Bacon, in his pregnant aphorisms upon sedition, does not venture on a definition of that indefinable term. Where, indeed, shall one draw the line between justifiable discontent and the inciting of men to lawless and violent acts? We shall notice presently the claim of a Scottish judge that an agitator may have good and upright intentions, and yet, if his words and acts lead to general discontent, he is guilty of sedition and perhaps of high treason. At the other extreme of thought stands the born malcontent. He is generally an idealist, having a keen sense of the miseries of mankind and very imperfect notions as to the difficulty of peacefully and permanently ending them. In times of political excitement the statesman has to deal with large bands of zealots nerved by these irreconcilable principles. It was the misfortune of Pitt that he sought to hold together a nation rent asunder by the doctrines of Burke and Paine. Compromise was out of the question; and yet a British statesman cannot govern unless the majority of the people is ready for compromise. His position becomes untenable if, while upholding the throne, he infuriates all friends of progress; if, when he seeks to remove abuses, he is dubbed a traitor to King, Church, and Constitution. And yet, to abandon his post because of these difficulties is not only cowardly, but also an act of disloyalty alike to King and people.

As the political thermometer rose towards fever point through the years 1792-3, Government kept closer watch upon the political Societies; but for a long time Pitt took no action against them. It seems probable that, if they had confined themselves to their professed programme (that of the Westminster Reformers of 1780) he would have remained passive. He did not prosecute those which in November 1792 congratulated the French Convention on the triumph of its arms in Belgium and the advent of a Gallic millennium. What, then, were the developments which met with his stern opposition?

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxxii, 929-44.

But, firstly, we must ask the question, Why did not Pitt, in view of the unswerving loyalty of the great majority of Britons, rely on the good sense and weight of that mass to overbear the Jacobinical minority? It is much to be regretted that he did not take that more intelligent and more courageous course. But the events of the French Revolution seemed to show the need of early taking decided measures against a resolute and desperate group. At half a dozen crises in the years 1789-92 firm action would have crushed the anarchic forces in Paris, Lyons, and Marseilles; but, for lack of a strong guiding hand, those forces broke loose, with results which all genuine friends of liberty have ever since deplored. It is perfectly certain that, if Mirabeau had had a free hand, he would have used coercive measures by the side of which those of Pitt's so-called "Reign of Terror" would have been but as a pop-gun to a cannon. Besides, to taunt Pitt with falseness to his principles of the years 1782-5 is to ignore the patent facts that he advocated very moderate changes in the representation. The Reform movement virtually collapsed in 1785. That which now borrowed its watchwords was in the main a Republican and levelling agency. The creed of the Radicals of 1793 was summed up, not in the academic programme of the Friends of the People, the lineal heir to the earlier Associations, but in Part II of Paine's "Rights of Man."

Here, surely, are the reasons for Pitt's repressive policy. He entered on it regretfully, but he felt no sense of inconsistency in his change of attitude towards Reform. The times had wholly changed; and that movement changed with them. As Macaulay has well pointed out, Pitt never declared that, under no circumstances, would he favour a moderate Reform of Parliament. But he did declare that in his view Reform was at present highly perilous; and he resolutely set himself to the task of coercing those men and those agencies who advocated it in dangerous forms and by lawless methods.

The first prosecution that need be noticed here was directed against Paine for the seditious utterances in the "Rights of Man," particularly in Part II. The Attorney-General made out a formidable indictment, whereupon Paine, then a member of the French National Convention, informed him that the prosecution might as well be directed against the man in the moon, and that the liberties of the people of England were in reality on their trial. After this impertinence the sentence went against Paine by default, and that, too, despite a skilful speech by Erskine (December 1792). The aim of Government of course was to warn those who were circulating Paine's works that their conduct was seditious and that they did so at their peril.

The Home Office Archives show that in very many cases the warning was disregarded, and several prosecutions ensued, with varying results. Still more frequent were the cases of cursing the King, sometimes in obscene terms. To these we need pay no heed. Frequently the offence was committed in taverns by democrats in a state of mental exaltation. To this exciting cause we may probably ascribe the folly of John Frost, the attorney with whom Pitt had some dealings during the Reform agitation of 1782. He was now charged with exclaiming excitedly: "I am for equality"; and, when challenged as to the meaning of his words, he added: "There ought to be no Kings." In this connection it should be remembered that Frost and Barlow had on 28th November 1792 presented to the French National Convention the most mischievous of all the addresses sent by Radical Clubs to that body. It ended with the statement that other nations would soon imitate France (that is by overthrowing the monarchy) and would "arm themselves for the purpose of claiming the Rights of Man."[1] This piece of bravado must have told against Frost at the trial; for it proved that amidst his potations at the tavern he spoke his real mind. Erskine did his best to defend Frost by quoting Pitt's letters to him of May 1782, on the subject of Reform.[2] The device was clever; but obviously Pitt's association with Frost for strictly constitutional purposes in 1782 could not excuse the seditious language of the latter under wholly different conditions eleven years later. Frost was condemned to six months' imprisonment in Newgate and was struck off the roll of attorneys.[1] Other noteworthy trials ensued, notably that of the "Morning Chronicle" newspaper, which ended in an acquittal; but it will be well now to turn to the important developments taking place north of the Tweed.

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[1] "Collection of Addresses . . . to the National Convention of France" (Debrett, 1793), 14.

[2] "Speeches of Lord Erskine," 293.

Scotland had now thrown off the trance under which she had lain since 1745; and her chief towns bade fair to outbid London, Leeds, Sheffield, and Norwich as centres of democratic activity. There was every reason why she should awake. She had very little influence in Parliament. She returned 45 members as against Cornwall's 44; while the total number of persons entitled to vote for the fifteen representatives of the Scottish burghs was 1,303,[2] a number smaller than that of the electors of the city of Westminster. This singular system was defended chiefly on the ground of the turbulence of the national character. Even in 1831 a Scottish member declared that Scots could never assemble without drawing blood; and one of their champions, Lord Cockburn, made the quaint admission: "The Scots are bad mobbers. They are too serious at it. They never joke, and they throw stones." It did not occur to that generation that the cure for this bloodthirsty seriousness was frequent public meetings, not no meetings at all. That a high-spirited people should so long have remained in political childhood seems incredible, until we remember that a borough election like that of Westminster was absolutely unknown in the whole course of Scottish history. Further, it was notorious that the 45 Scottish members were the most obedient group of placemen in the House of Commons; and their docility had increased under the bountiful sway of Henry Dundas, whose control of patronage sufficed to keep the Caledonian squad close to heel.

This political apathy was now to end. The men of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dundee began to discuss the "Rights of Man," and to follow the lead given by the London Corresponding Society. Thus, on 3rd October 1792, Lieutenant-Colonel William Dalrymple presided over the first meeting of "The Associated Friends of the Constitution and of the People," held at Glasgow. Resolutions were passed in favour of an equal representation of the people in Parliament, shorter Parliaments, and co-operation with "the Friends of the People" in London. The entrance and annual subscriptions were fixed at sixpence and one shilling. Thomas Muir of Huntershill, an able young advocate, was appointed Vice-President. Other Societies were soon formed, and on 11th December there assembled at Edinburgh a General Convention of Delegates from the Societies of the Friends of the People throughout Scotland. Its proceedings were orderly, beginning and ending with prayer. Resolutions were passed deprecating violence whether in language or action; and the presence either of Lord Daer or Colonel Dalrymple in the chair showed that some, at least, of the gentry were for Reform. This was exceptional. A little later the gentlemen of several towns and counties asserted their loyalty in flamboyant petitions; and the farmers of Dalkeith district at their meeting added to their loyal toasts the following: "May we have no fox in our fold or greys (wild oats) in our corn."[1] Sir Kenneth Mackenzie on 3rd January 1793 informed William Pulteney that in the North the towns were thoroughly loyal, with the exception of Perth and Dundee, where certain ministers and writers led the people astray.[2]

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[1] "State Trials," xxii, 471-522.

[2] Porritt, ii, 128.

Nevertheless, the authorities, notably the Lord Advocate, Robert Dundas, took alarm; and on 2nd January 1793 Thomas Muir was brought before the deputy-sheriff of Midlothian. Muir was a man of highly interesting personality. The son of a Glasgow tradesman, he had shown marked abilities at school and at the University, whence, owing to his advanced opinions, he was forced to migrate to Edinburgh. There, in his twenty-seventh year, he soon became a leader of the Scottish Reformers, his sincerity, eloquence, and enthusiasm everywhere arousing keen interest. Had his good sense been equal to his abilities, he might have gone far; but events soon showed him to be tactless and headstrong. He went far beyond the rest of the delegates assembled at Edinburgh, namely, in bringing forward, despite the reluctance of the Convention, an Address from the Society of United Irishmen in Dublin. Their conduct much alarmed the authorities at Dublin Castle, who adopted stringent precautions. Muir should therefore have seen, what his colleagues did see, that any plan of co-operation was certain to irritate Government. Nevertheless he persisted in bringing before the

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[1] "H. O.," Scotland, 7.

[2] *Ibid.*

Convention the Irish Address, which strongly pointed out the need of common action in the struggle for Reform and urged both peoples to persevere "until we have planted the flag of freedom on the summit, and are at once victorious and secure." Further, the authorities accused Muir of circulating Paine's writings and other pamphlets, including "A Dialogue between the Governors and the Governed," which contained such sentences as these: "The law is the general will—a new order." "Nations cannot revolt; tyrants are the only rebels." "We will live without tyrants, without impostors (priests)."[1] The writings were probably seditious in their tendency;[2] but the evidence that he circulated them was of the flimsiest character.[3]

Unfortunately, Muir left the country, though in no clandestine manner, while legal proceedings were pending. After a short stay in London he proceeded to Paris, in order (as he said at his trial) to try to persuade the French democrats to spare the life of Louis XVI. The credibility of this statement is lessened by the fact that he arrived in Paris only the evening before the King's execution and remained there long after that tragedy.[4] A letter from a Scot in Paris, James Smith, to a friend in Glasgow, which the postal authorities opened, stated that the writer met Muir in a *café* of the Palais Royal; that Muir did not hear of his indictment till the evening of 8th February, and would return to face his trial, though he was loth to leave France, as he had made "valuable and dear connections." "Mr. Christie advised me," adds the writer, "to make some little proficiency in the language before I begin to think of beginning to do anything."[5] Now, as a clique of Britons in Paris had not long before drunk the toast of "The coming Convention of Great Britain and Ireland," Government naturally connected the efforts of Muir with this republican propaganda. His next doings increased this suspicion. He left France on an American ship which landed him at Belfast; he stayed there a few days, and landed at Stranraer on 31st July, only to be arrested, along with his books and papers, and sent to Edinburgh.

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[1] "State Trials," xxiii, 118-26.

[2] I differ here from Lord Cockburn, "Examination of the Trials for Sedition in Scotland," i, 147.

[3] *Ibid.*, i, 162-5; "State Trials," xxiii, 146-8, 160.

[4] P. Mackenzie, "Life of Muir," does not state the reason for Muir's visit to Paris.

[5] "H. O.," Scotland, 8. Dunlop, Lord Provost of Glasgow, sent it to Robert Dundas on 12th March 1793. For this William Christie, who translated the French Constitution of 1791 into English, see Alger, "Englishmen in the French Revolution," 78, 98.

The ensuing trial, held on 30th and 31st August, aroused intense interest, owing to the eloquence of Muir and the unscrupulous zeal of the Scottish authorities in ensuring his conviction. They packed the jury with men who belonged to a loyal Association; and it is said that the Lord Justice Clerk, McQueen of Braxfield, welcomed one of them with the words: "Come awa', Maister Horner, come awa', and help us to hang ane of thae daamed scoondrels." The trial itself bristled with irregularities; and Muir, who rejected the proffered help of Erskine and conducted his own defence, fastened on them so effectively, that at the conclusion of his final speech the Court resounded with applause. All was in vain. The jury found him guilty, whereupon the Court of Justiciary pronounced sentence of transportation for fourteen years.[1]

Admiration of the virtues and courage of Muir must not blind us to the fact that his conduct had been most provocative. His visit to Paris, on the scarcely credible pretext that he went thither to save the King's life, his connection with the United Irishmen, and his stay in Belfast, told against him. Robert Dundas, in informing his uncle, Henry Dundas, of his arrest, added: "I have little doubt that, tho' he avows his intention of coming home to have been a view to stand trial, [that] he is an emissary from France or the disaffected in Ireland."[2] The Scot who first advocated common action with the Irish malcontents should have paid good heed to his steps. Muir did not do so. Accordingly, though the direct evidence at the trial told in his favour, the circumstantial evidence weighed heavily against him.[3] At such a time men's actions count for more than their words. It was the visit to Paris and the dealings with the United Irishmen, far more than biassed witnesses and the bullying of Braxfield, which led to the condemnation of this talented youth. For his arrest occurred at the time when terror was the order of the day at Paris, and when the issue of an inflammatory address at Dundee spread panic in official circles.

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[1] See Campbell, "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," vii, 273, note, and viii, 143-5, for criticisms on the judges: also Cockburn, *op. cit.*, i, 147-80; "Life of Romilly," i, 23.

[2] "H. O.," Scotland, 8. Letter of 2nd August 1793. Dundas further stated that Muir had several Irish handbills on him.

[3] Curiously enough, Lord Cockburn paid no heed to this in his otherwise able examination of the case.

Before adverting to this matter, we may note that Muir settled down by no means unhappily at Sydney, and bought a farm which he named Huntershill, after his birthplace. It is now a suburb of Sydney. A letter from the infant settlement, published in the "Gentleman's Magazine" of March 1797, describes him and the other Scottish "martyrs"—Skirving, Margarot, and Gerrald—as treated indulgently by the authorities, who allotted to them convicts to till their lands. Shortly afterwards Muir escaped, and, after exciting experiences, in which he was wounded, made his way to France. In Paris, early in 1798, he published some articles on the United Irishmen, which Wolfe Tone and other Irish patriots deemed most harmful to their cause. They therefore remonstrated with him, but received the reply that he knew Ireland as well as they did, and had the confidence of the United Irishmen as much as they had. Wolfe Tone says of him: "Of all the vain obstinate blockheads that ever I met I never saw his equal."[1] Fortunately for his associates, Muir retired into the provinces and died in the year 1799.

Dundee played a leading part in the democratic agitation. Its population, consisting largely of poor weavers, suffered severely in the year 1793 from dearness of food and scarcity of fuel. On this mass of needy operatives the doctrines of Paine fell like a spark on tinder. Dundee became the chief focus of discontent in Scotland. A Tree of Liberty was planted in Belmont Grounds; bread riots were of frequent occurrence; and Dundas was burnt in effigy. In the Home Office Archives is a statement that a local tradesman named Wyllie generously supplied the waistcoat and breeches: "they was of satin."[2] In July 1793 there appeared an "Address to the People," dated "Berean Meeting House, Dundee," which painted the Government in the darkest colours, and contained these assertions: "You are plunged into war by a wicked Ministry and a compliant Parliament, who seem careless and unconcerned for your interest, the end and design of which is almost too horrid to relate, the destruction of a whole people merely because they will be free. . . . Your treasure is wasting fast: the blood of your brethren is pouring out, and all this to form chains for a free people and eventually to rivet them on yourselves." On 1st August 1793 a Government agent found the MS. from which this placard was printed in the house of a liquor-seller in Edinburgh. It was in the writing of a minister, Palmer: so were two letters referring to it.[1] Robert Dundas therefore sent to have Palmer arrested. In mentioning this fact to Henry Dundas, he added that Palmer was "the most dangerous rebel in Scotland." It transpired in the course of the trial that the address was originally written by a weaver named Mealmaker, and that Palmer re-wrote it, toning down some expressions which he thought too strong. Mealmaker was a witness at the trial, but was not allowed directly to incriminate himself. The authorities preferred to strike at Palmer, a man of parts, educated at Eton and Cambridge, who latterly had officiated as Unitarian Minister at Montrose and Dundee. Doubtless these facts as well as his association with the Scottish Friends of Liberty brought on him a sentence of five years' transportation.[2]

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[1] T. Wolfe Tone, "Autobiography," ii, 285.

[2] "H. O.," Scotland, 7.

If the authorities hoped to crush the Scottish movement by these severities they were disappointed; for it throve on them. A spy, "J. B.," who regularly supplied Robert Dundas with reports about the Edinburgh club, wrote on 14th September 1793 that the sentence on Palmer had given new life to the Association; for, after a time of decline in the early summer, more than 200 now attended its meetings. On 28th October he stated that nearly all the Scottish clubs had revived. Dunlop, Lord Provost of Glasgow, also declared that discontent made progress every day; that the soldiery were corrupted, and that there was an urgent need of barracks.[3] Indignation also ran high at London. Evan Nepean wrote to Robert Dundas: "There is a devil of a stir here about Muir and Palmer." Braxfield's address to the jury was thus parodied in the "Morning Chronicle" of 4th March 1794:

I am bound by the law, while I sit in this place,
To say in plain terms what I think of this case.
My opinion is this, and you're bound to pursue it,
The defendants are guilty, and I'll make them rue it.

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[1] "H. O.," Scotland, 8. W. Scot to R. Dundas, 1st August.

[2] See the "Narrative of the Sufferings of T. F. Palmer and W. Skirving" (1794), and "Monthly Mag.," xvii, 83-5, for Palmer's adventures. He died of dysentery in 1799.

[3] "H. O.," Scotland, 9.

Nevertheless, as another Convention had met at Edinburgh, Robert Dundas wrote to his uncle on 2nd November 1793 strongly deprecating any mitigation of the sentences. It was therefore in vain that the Earl of Lauderdale, Grey, and Sheridan interviewed the Home Secretary and pointed out that the offence of "leasing-making," or verbal sedition, was punishable in Scots law only with banishment, not with forcible detention at the Antipodes.[1] Henry Dundas informed his nephew on 16th November that he would refer the whole question back to the Court of Justiciary, and if it defended the verdict "scientifically" and in full detail, he would "carry the sentence into execution and meet the clamour in Parliament without any kind of dismay."[2] Braxfield and his colleagues defended their conduct in an exhaustive treatise on "leasing-making," which the curious may read in the Home Office Archives.

What was the attitude of Pitt towards these events? Ultimately he was responsible for these unjust and vindictive sentences; and it is a poor excuse to urge that he gave Dundas a free hand in Scottish affairs. Still, it is unquestionable that the initiative lay with the two Dundases. If any Englishman exerted influence on the sentences it was the Lord Chancellor, Loughborough.[3] He treated with contempt the motion of Earl Stanhope on 31st January 1794 for an examination into the case of Muir, when the Earl found himself in the position which he so much coveted—a minority of one. On the cases of Muir and Palmer coming before the Commons (10th March), Pitt upheld the Scottish Court of Justiciary in what was perhaps the worst speech of his whole career. He defended even the careful selection of jurymen hostile to Muir on the curious plea that though they were declared loyalists, yet they might be impartial as jurymen. He further denied that there had been any miscarriage of justice, or that the sentence on the "daring delinquents" needed revision. And these excuses for biassed and vindictive sentences were urged after Fox had uttered a noble and manly plea for justice, not for mercy. Grey bitterly declared that Muir was to be sent for fourteen years to Sydney for the offence of pleading for Reform, which Pitt and the Duke of Richmond advocated twelve years before. They sat in the King's Cabinet: Muir was sent to herd with felons. This taunt flew wide of the mark. Pitt in his motions for Reform had always made it clear that, while desirous of "a moderate and substantial Reform," he utterly repudiated universal suffrage. If those were his views in 1782-5, how could he accept the Radical programme now that it included the absurd demand for annual Parliaments? None the less Pitt was answerable for the action of the Home Minister in referring the sentences back to the judges who inflicted them—a course of conduct at once cowardly and farcical. Pitt's speech also proves him to have known of the irregularities that disgraced the trials. But he, a lawyer, condoned them and applauded the harsh and vindictive sentences. In short, he acted as an alarmist, not as a dispenser of justice.

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[1] Their Memorial to Henry Dundas is in "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 27. They did not claim that he was innocent, merely that the punishment was excessive and unjust.

[2] "Arniston Mems.," 240.

[3] Campbell, *op. cit.*, viii, 145, 147.

It is easy for us now to descant on the virtues of moderation. But how many men would have held on an even course when the guillotine worked its fell work in France, when the Goddess of Reason was enthroned in Notre Dame, and when Jacobinism seemed about to sweep over the Continent? Here, as at so many points, France proved to be the worst foe to ordered liberty. Robespierre and Hébert were the men who assured the doom of Muir and Palmer. A trivial incident will suffice to illustrate the alarm of Englishmen at the assembly of a British Convention. In December 1793 Drane, the mayor of Reading, reported to his neighbour Addington (Speaker of the House of Commons) that the "infamous Tom Paine" and a member of the French Convention had been overheard conversing in French in a public-house. Their talk turned on a proposed visit to the British Convention then sitting in Edinburgh. At once Addington sent for a warrant from the Home Office, while the mayor urged his informant to hunt the miscreants down. The machinery of the law was set in motion. A search was instituted; the warrant came down from Whitehall; and not until the sum of fourteen guineas had gone to the informant for his patriotic exertions did the authorities discover that they had been hoaxed.[1]

The Edinburgh Convention, consisting of delegates of forty-five Reform Societies, seems to have pursued dully decorous methods until 6th November, when citizens Hamilton Rowan and Simon Butler came to represent Ireland; Joseph Gerrald and Maurice Margarot were the delegates from the London Corresponding Society; and Sinclair and York from the Society for Constitutional Information which met at the Crown and Anchor. A Convention of English Societies assembled at London about the same time, and deputed the four delegates to join the Edinburgh body and form a British Convention.[1] Accordingly, on 19th November, it took the title, "British Convention of Delegates of the People, associated to obtain Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments." The statement of Margarot, that the London police sought to prevent his journey to Edinburgh, should have been a warning to members to measure their words well. Unfortunately, Margarot, a vain hot-headed fellow, at once began to boast of the importance of the Radical Societies; though fluctuating in number, they were numerous in London; there were thirty of them in Norwich; and in the Sheffield district their members numbered 50,000. "If," he added, "we could get a Convention of England and Scotland called, we might represent six or seven hundred thousand males, which is a majority of all the adults of the Kingdom; and the Ministry would not dare to refuse our rights."[2] Butler then declared that Belfast was in a state of veiled rebellion; Gerrald, the ablest and best educated of the delegates, also scoffed at the old party system, and said, "party is ever a bird of prey, and the people their banquet." On 19th November a delegate from Sheffield, M. C. Brown, moved that the next British Convention should meet near the borders of England and Scotland. Thereupon Gerrald proposed that York should be chosen, despite its ecclesiastical surroundings; for (said he), "as the Saviour of the world was often found in the company of sinners, let us go there for the same gracious purpose, to convert to repentance."[3]

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 27.

All this was but the prelude to more serious work. On 26th-28th November the Convention declared it to be the duty of citizens to resist any law, similar to that lately passed in Dublin, for preventing the assembly of a Convention in Great Britain; and the delegates resolved to prepare to summon a Convention if the following emergencies should arise—an invasion, the landing of Hanoverian troops, the passing of a Convention Act, or the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. These defiant resolutions were proposed by Sinclair; and, as he afterwards became a Government informer, they were probably intended to lure the Convention away from its proper business into seditious ways. However that may be, the delegates solemnly assented to these resolutions.

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[1] For the instructions see E. Smith, "The Story of the English Jacobins," 87.

[2] "State Trials," xxiii, 414.

[3] J. Gerrald had published a pamphlet, "A Convention the only Means of saving us from Ruin" (1793). It is in the British Museum.

Scotsmen will notice alike with pride and indignation that the delegates of the Societies north of the Tweed adhered to their main purpose, Parliamentary Reform, until, under the lead of the men of London, Sheffield, and Dublin, debates became almost Parisian in vehemence. As reported in the "Edinburgh Gazetteer" of 3rd December, they gave Robert Dundas the wished-for handle of attack. Then and there he decided to disperse the Convention, so he informed Henry Dundas in the following letter of 6th December: "Last Tuesday's '[Edinburgh] Gazetteer,' containing a further account of the proceedings of the Convention appeared to the Solicitor and me so strong that we agreed to take notice of them. The proper warrants were accordingly made, and early yesterday morning put in execution against Margarot, Gerrald, Callender, Skirving, and one or two others, and with such effect that we have secured all their Minutes and papers. Their conduct has excited universal detestation."[1] The expulsion took place quite peaceably. The Lord Provost informed the delegates that it was not their meeting, but their publications, that led him to intervene. The Chairman, Paterson, thereupon "skulked off"; but Brown, the Sheffield delegate, took the chair, and declared that he would not quit it save under compulsion. The Lord Provost and constables then pulled him down; and the meeting was adjourned. Events ran the same course on the morrow, save that the chairman, Gerrald, was allowed to wind up the proceedings with prayer before he was pulled down. Thus ended the first British Convention.

The natural sequel was a trial of the leaders, Sinclair, Margarot, Gerrald, and Skirving. Sinclair turned informer, whereupon his indictment was allowed to lapse. The others were charged with attending the meetings of the Convention which, "under the pretence of procuring a Reform of Parliament, were evidently of a dangerous and destructive tendency," modelled on those of the French Convention and with the like aims in view. The charge was held to be proven, and they were severally sentenced to transportation for fourteen years. The cases aroused keen interest, in part owing to the novel claims put forward by the prosecutor and endorsed by the Judges. The Lord Advocate argued that these men, in claiming to represent a majority of the people, were in reality planning a revolt; and Lord Justice Clerk finally declared that the crime of sedition consisted "in endeavouring to create a dissatisfaction in the country, which nobody can tell where it will end. It will very naturally end in overt rebellion; if it has that tendency, though not in the mind of the parties at the time, yet, if they have been guilty of poisoning the minds of the lieges, I apprehend that that will constitute the crime of sedition to all intents and purposes."[1]

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[1] "H. O.," Scotland, 9.

To find a parallel to this monstrous claim, that sedition may be unintentional and may consist in some action which the Government judges by its results, one would have to hark back to the days of Judge Jeffreys, whom indeed McQueen of Braxfield resembled in ferocity, cunning, and effrontery. The insolence of Margarot at the bar to some extent excused the chief judge for the exhibition of the same conduct on the bench. But in the case of Gerrald, an English gentleman of refined character and faultless demeanour, the brutalities of Braxfield aroused universal loathing. In one respect Gerrald committed an imprudence. He appeared in the dock, not in a wig, but displaying a shock of dishevelled hair, a sign of French and republican sympathies which seemed a defiance to the Court. Nevertheless, his speech in his own defence moved to its depths the mind of a young poet who had tramped all the way from Glasgow in the bleak March weather in order to hear the trial. At the end of the speech young Campbell turned to his neighbour, a humble tradesman, and said: "By heavens, Sir, that is a great man"; to which there came the reply: "Yes, Sir, he is not only a great man himself, but he makes every other man feel great who listens to him."

In truth, the Scottish trials were a moral defeat for Pitt and his colleagues. Sympathy with the prisoners and detestation of the judges aroused a general outcry, which became furious when Braxfield declared that he had no idea that his sentence of transportation involved servitude and hard labour.[2] The assertion implies an incredible ignorance in the man who had packed the juries and sought to get his victims hanged. It may be regarded as a cunning and cowardly attempt to shift part of the odium on to the Government. Certainly the prestige of the Cabinet now fell to zero. Ministers were held responsible for Braxfield's wanton vagaries, and were accused of luring English democrats into the meshes of the Scottish law. This last charge is absurd. As we have seen, the London police sought to stop Margarot, Sinclair, and Gerrald from going to Edinburgh. It was their presence and that of the Irishmen which gave to the Convention almost a national character, and placed it in rivalry to Parliament. Their speeches were by far the most provocative. Finally, as the letter quoted above shows, the initiative in arresting the delegates was taken by Robert Dundas and the Scottish Solicitor-General. On 11th December Henry Dundas wrote to his nephew: "You get great credit here [London] for your attack on the Convention."[1]

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[1] "State Trials," xxiii, 766.

[2] "Auckland Journals," iii, 205.

Far different was the comment of the London Corresponding Society. On 20th January 1794 that body convened a great meeting which passed protests against the war, the expulsion of the British Convention, and the arrest of delegates. It also resolved that the general committee should sit permanently throughout the ensuing session. Further, that if the Government attacked the liberties of the people in the ways described above, the committee should call "a General Convention of the People for taking such measures under their consideration." Equally threatening were the resolutions of the Constitutional Society of London.[3] Pitt resolved to take up the gauntlet flung down by these two powerful Societies. On 24th February 1794 Eaton, a publisher of Newgate Street, was tried for publishing in his periodical pamphlet, "Politics for the People: or Hogswash," a little parable with which that witty lecturer, Thelwall, had delighted a debating society. He told how a gamecock, resplendent with ermine-spotted breast, and crown or cockscomb, lorded it greedily over all the fowls of the farmyard.[4] The parallel to George III was sufficiently close to agitate the official mind; but the jury gave an open verdict, which implied that the King was not hinted at.

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[1] "Arniston Mems.," 242.

[2] E. Smith, "The Eng. Jacobins," 93-7.

[3] See "Report of the Committee of Secrecy" (17th May 1794).

[4] C. Cestre, "John Thelwall," 77.

The next prosecution, that of Thomas Walker, of Manchester, and six others broke down in a way highly discreditable to the authorities. Walker's services to the cause of Reform had, as we have seen, been conspicuous alike in energy and moderation, and his enemies in the Church and King Club made great exertions in order to procure a conviction. The archives of the Home Office throw a sinister light on their methods. A magistrate of Manchester, the Rev. John Griffith, informed the Home Secretary that Booth, a man who was imprisoned in June 1793 for seditious practices, made a declaration against Thomas Walker and McCullum, members of the local Constitutional Society. According to Booth, McCullum had said: "Petitioning Parliament be d—d. You may as well petition the devil to reform himself. The only way is for each Society to send a number of delegates to a certain place, and there declare themselves the Representatives of the People and support themselves as such." Thomas Walker had also said that each member must have a musket, for they would soon want them.[1] But it transpired in the trial of Walker, McCullum, and others that Griffith had let Booth see that he wanted to incriminate Walker. He not only offered Booth his pardon for such evidence, but left him alone with Dunn, a malicious perjurer, the falsity of whose charges against Walker was convincingly demonstrated.[2] The case proves how far an unscrupulous magistrate could succeed in getting charges trumped up against an innocent man who opposed him in politics. Doubtless in other cases personal spite, or the desire of a reward, led to the offer of false charges; and the student who peruses the Home Office archives needs to remember the Greek caution, *μέμνησθ' ἀπιστεῖν*, as much as if he were perusing French Memoirs.

It is therefore with much doubt that one reads the declaration of a Sheffield magistrate, in May 1794, that there was in that town "a most horrid conspiracy against State and Church under the pretence of Reform." A vast number of pikes and spears had been made and "cats" to throw in the road to lame the horses. 2nd July was fixed for the storming of the barracks and town. "It is a mercy the plot is discovered. I am to be all night in the search." More detailed is the deposition of a magistrate of Sheffield, James Wilkinson, that a democrat named Widdison had made several pikes and sold twelve to Gales, a well-known Jacobinical printer. Further, that a witness, William Green, swore that a man named Jackson had employed him and others to make spear-heads; they made twelve dozen or more in two days, and the heads were sent to the lodgings of Hill and Jackson. Wilkinson wrote for instructions how to deal with these men; also for a warrant to arrest Gales. On 20th May Dundas sent down warrants for the arrest of Gales, W. Camage, H. Yorke (*alias* Redhead), W. Broomhead, R. Moody, and T. Humphreys; he also issued a warrant against Williams, a gun-engraver, of the Tower, in London.[1]

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 30.

[2] "State Trials," xxiii, 1055-1166. For technical reasons this statement of Booth could not be given at Walker's trial. Besides Walker's Constitutional Society, there were two others, the Reformation and Patriotic Societies, founded in March and April 1792.

In Birmingham, as we have seen, the two magistrates, Carles and Spencer, were out and out loyalists; and, as they wrote to Dundas on 23rd May 1794 that there was not enough evidence to warrant a search for arms, we may infer that the Midland capital caused the authorities less concern than rebellious Sheffield. But even at Birmingham, with its traditions of exuberant loyalty, there were grounds for concern. John Brook, the mayor, informed Dundas that there were many malcontents in the neighbourhood, especially at Dudley.

Turning to the East, we find signs that Norwich seethed with discontent. From that city had come the first suggestion of a General Convention of the People. On 5th March 1793 one of the thirty Societies of Norwich wrote up to the London Corresponding Society advocating that step, which Hardy and his colleagues approved "so soon as the great body of the people shall be courageous and virtuous enough to join us in the attempt." I have found no proof that either at Norwich or in London these Societies used illegal methods. The seditious placards posted up at Norwich may have been the work of some fanatic or of an *agent provocateur.* But it is very doubtful whether the holding of a People's Convention in the manner proposed was not an act of defiance to Parliament, and therefore seditious. Individual members certainly came within the ban of the law. Thus, Dundas received tidings that two members of Hardy's Society, named Stone and Meakins, were circulating seditious writings in Essex. When arrested they had with them one or two military books, copies of the revolutionary song, *Ça ira*, and similar papers;[1] but this fact does not incriminate the Society at large. In fact, the reports as to the purchase of arms and secret drillings are not very convincing. To take a few instances: information was sent to the Home Office that a man named Kitchen had sixty pikes in his house in George Street, near York Buildings; also that men were drilled secretly at the house of Spence, a seller of seditious pamphlets in the Little Turnstile, Holborn, and at that of Shelmerdine, a small tradesman of Southwark; the arms in the last case were bought from Williams, of the Tower, with a sum of £10 contributed by "a desperate tailor of China Walk, Lambeth."[2] Did patriotism or private spite or greed of money incite these reports? Drawings of pikes and spear-heads also diversified the report of the Secret Committee of the Lords appointed to investigate seditious proceedings, and probably convinced lovers of realism that plots actually existed.

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[1] See E. Smith, "The Eng. Jacobins," ch. vi, for the meetings at Sheffield and the part played by Yorke.

More alarming in reality were the preparations for a General Convention of the People. The authorities knew that plans were actually on foot for sending delegates to form such a body. On 27th March 1794 the London Corresponding Society consulted the sister club on this question; and in due course delegates from the two Societies passed resolutions in favour of the scheme. Hardy thereupon sent a printed letter round to similar bodies, probably early in the month of April 1794. It ran thus:

> Notwithstanding the unparalleled audacity of a corrupt and overbearing faction which at present tramples on the rights and liberties of our people, our meetings cannot, in England, be interrupted without the previous adoption of a Convention Bill[3]—a measure it is our duty to anticipate. . . . Let us then form another British Convention. We have a central situation in our view, which we believe would be most convenient for the whole island, but which we forbear to mention . . . till we have the answers of the Societies with which we are in correspondence. Let us have your answer, then, by the 20th at farthest,

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 31.

[2] *Ibid.*, 27, 29. Spence purveyed "Pigs' Meat," while Eaton sold "Hogs Wash." The titles are a take-off of Burke's phrase "the swinish multitude."

[3] *I.e.*, similar to the one passed in Dublin against a People's Convention.

earlier if possible, whether you approve of the measure and how many delegates you can send, with the number also, if possible, of your Societies.

PS. We have appointed a Secret Committee on this. Will you do the same?[1]

In order to further the scheme, the London Corresponding Society held a meeting on 14th April at Chalk Farm, when an ardent appeal was read from Hardy to resist the encroachments on liberty recently made by "apostate reformers"—a fling at Pitt. "Are they alone," he asked, "to judge of the fit time for Reform?" The meeting then thanked Earl Stanhope for his manly and successful opposition to the attempt to bring Hanoverian and Hessian troops into England; it also condemned the late rapid advances of despotism and the arming one part of the people against the other. Finally it declared that in cases of necessity the safety of the people was the only law. We may here note that a few Hanoverian and Hessian battalions had been landed in Hampshire, as a temporary measure, previous to their transference to other ships. This occasioned some clamour at Westminster, Grey, Fox, Sheridan and others claiming that the liberties of England were in the direst danger. Pitt refused to accept a Bill of Indemnity for his action, and the House supported him by a great majority.[2]

The other reference at the Chalk Farm meeting was to the proposal to sanction the subscriptions to the Volunteer forces now being raised in various counties.[3] At the outset this noble movement had in view the defence of the constitution no less than of the land; and this doubtless accounts for the fact that Coke, Mingay, and other Norfolk Whigs struggled desperately and successfully to break up a county meeting held at Norwich for this purpose on 12th April, shouting down even so able a speaker as Windham. In general, however, these meetings were an immense success. That at Aylesbury realized £5,851 for a county corps; and one at Epsom, for Surrey, brought in nearly double as much.[4] Most noteworthy of all these meetings was one of 19th April 1794 at Birmingham, where loyal sentiments crystalized in a rhetorical jewel of rare lustre. The "Loyal

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[1] "Report of the Parl. Comm. of Secrecy" (17th May 1794).

[2] Parl. Hist.," xxx, 1363-91; xxxi, 1-27.

[3] *Ibid.*, xxxi, 97-121.

[4] Morning Chronicle" for April 1794.

True Blues" of Birmingham, in view of the threats of the French "to insult the chalky cliffs of Albion and to plant in this island their accursed tree of liberty, more baneful in its effects than the poisonous tree of Java which desolates the country and corrupts the winds of heaven," resolved to quit the field of argument and to take arms as a Military Association. For nothing could be so effective as "the decided and awful plan of the whole Nation rising in a mass of Volunteers, determined to dispute every inch of ground with their daring aggressors and to spill the last drop of their blood in defence of their religion and their laws." They beg Edward Carver to command them; they will choose their uniform, will arrange themselves as grenadiers and light infantry; and, "to preserve the *coup d'œil*, the whole corps will be arranged with the strictest attention to the height of the members."[1] Possibly the Royalists of Birmingham may have known of the hint conveyed in Hardy's letter, that the National Convention should assemble in some convenient centre, a phrase which seemed to point to their town, which, indeed, the Chartists chose for that purpose in 1839.

In view of the fervent loyalty manifested on all sides, Ministers might surely have trusted to the majority to control the restless minority. Auckland expressed the general opinion when he said that the country in the proportion of ten to one was sound and loyal.[2] As the majority was armed, while the malcontents had but small stores of pikes, there was little cause for fear, though in the minority were some desperate men. In particular, Richard Davison, a prominent member of the Sheffield Constitutional Society, recommended the clubs of London and Norwich to buy consignments of pikes in order to resist the "newly-armed minions of the bare-faced aristocracy of the present Administration"; and it afterwards appeared that he could sell them at twenty pence each.[3] This letter was sent off on 24th April, 1794, seventeen days after the holding of a mass meeting on Castle Hill, Sheffield, at which the chairman, Henry Yorke (*alias* Redhead), declared that, when the sun of Reason shone in its fullest meridian, the people would turn out the 558 gentlemen from Westminster. The meeting resolved that, as the people ought to demand universal suffrage as a right, and not petition for it as a favour, they would never again petition the

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 30.

[2] "Auckland Journals," iii, 213.

[3] "State Trials," xxiv 588, 600 601.

House of Commons on this subject.[1] Contemptuous epithets were now constantly hurled at Parliament. On 2nd May, that genial toper, Horne Tooke, of Wimbledon, declared at a dinner of the Constitutional Society in London that Parliament was a scoundrel sink of corruption, and that the scoundrel Opposition joined the scoundrel Government in order to destroy the rights of Englishmen. In order to add weight to his epithets he called the company to witness to his complete sobriety.[2]

Pitt and his colleagues now decided to strike at the leaders who were planning a British Convention. Of these the most formidable was the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society. Accordingly, early on 12th May, some Bow Street officers made their way into Hardy's shop, No. 9, Piccadilly, arrested him, seized his papers, ransacking the room where Mrs. Hardy was in bed. The shock to her nerves was such as to bring on premature child-birth with fatal results. On the same day a royal message came to Parliament announcing that the efforts of certain Societies to summon a Convention in defiance of Parliament had led him to order the seizure of their books and papers. Those of the Corresponding and Constitutional Societies were brought, sealed up, to the House of Commons on the morrow, whereupon Pitt moved for the appointment of a secret committee to examine them. He himself, Dundas, and nineteen other members soon drew up the Report. When presented on 16th May, it contained a statement of all the threatening symptoms of the time, and so far ignored the legal efforts of those Societies as to form a very alarming diagnosis.[3]

The fears of Ministers were further aroused by the contents of a letter from the Rev. Jeremiah Joyce (tutor of Earl Stanhope's son) to Horne Tooke, which the Post Office had seized. It announced the arrest of citizen Hardy, and ended thus: "Query: is it possible to get ready by Thursday?"[4] Some effort of the imagination was needed to figure the Silenus of the literary world as a plotter against the lives of Ministers. But they now decided to arrest him and the Reverend Jeremiah, as well as Bonney, Richter, and Kyd, also members of the Constitutional

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[1] "State Trials," xxiv, 626.

[2] E. Smith, "Eng. Jacobins," 116.

[3] "Parl. Hist.," xxxi, 475-97.

[4] "Life of Horne Tooke," ii, 119. It was afterwards absurdly said that Dundas, Horne Tooke's neighbour at Wimbledon, had had the letter filched from his house. Both of them lived on the west side of the "green."

Society, besides Camage and one or two other democrats of Sheffield. Davison, the would-be seller of pikes, had fled betimes.

These were the circumstances which induced Pitt to propose the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act (16th May). The Report of the Secret Committee having been read, he proceeded to exaggerate the import of the more threatening parts of the evidence, and to convince the House that these Societies, which had congratulated the French Convention, and still aped its methods, were plotting to set up an authority openly hostile to Parliament. With all the force of his oratory he pictured the state of things that must ensue—"an enormous torrent of insurrection, which would sweep away all the barriers of government, law and religion, and leave our country a naked waste for usurped authority to range in, uncontrolled and unresisted." Despite the warning of Fox that the remedy now proposed was worse than the evil which it sought to avert; despite the pleas of Grey and Sheridan against indecent haste in hurrying on this arbitrary measure, it was forced through every stage in the Commons at that single sitting; finally, at half-past three in the morning, the numbers of the Whig protestors sank to 13, while the Ministerialists still mustered 108 strong.[1]

This collapse of the Opposition was due to a sharp cleavage in its ranks on the vital issues now at stake. As has already appeared, Pitt had consulted the Duke of Portland and his immediate followers on subjects affecting public order. Some of the Old Whigs, notably Windham, served on the Committee of Secrecy; and the evidence there forthcoming led them to propose a general support of Government both in its war policy and the maintenance of order. Those eager Royalists, Burke and Windham, took the lead in proposing an alliance with the Ministry The question arose whether the Old Whigs should support from outside or actually coalesce with the Ministry, taking their fair share of power. Burke strongly advised the latter course as the only means of assuring continued and strenuous support. This opened a sluice gate of correspondence, resulting in important changes in the Cabinet. I shall refer to this matter later, merely noting here that the Duke of Portland took over from Dundas the Home Office, which was thenceforth limited to British and Irish affairs, Dundas becoming Secretary of State for War, and

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxxi, 497-505.

Windham Secretary at War. The changes were most opportune; for they strengthened the administrative machine and served to build up a national party strong enough to cope with the growing difficulties of the time. Thenceforth there was no danger of the overthrow of the Ministry. Further, the panic pervading all parts of England in May 1794 was soon allayed by the news of Howe's victory, termed "the glorious First of June"; while in July the fall of Robespierre caused a general sense of relief. In view of these events, Pitt would have done well to relax his efforts against the British Jacobins. He held on his way and encountered sharp rebuffs. The trial of Hardy and others in October dragged on to a great length; and, after hearing an enormous mass of evidence (some of which proved the possession of arms by democrats) the jury returned a verdict of Not Guilty. This result, due to the masterly defence by Erskine and Gibbs, aroused a tumult of joy in the vast crowd outside such as London had rarely seen. Hardy afterwards asserted that, in case of a conviction, Government had decided to arrest about 800 more persons.[1] This is mere hearsay; but it has been fastened upon by those who seek to father upon Pitt the design of reviving the days of Strafford and "Thorough." A fortnight previously Watt, once a government informer, was convicted at Edinburgh of a treasonable plot to set the city on fire, sack the banks, and attack the castle. Before he went to execution he confessed his guilt.[2]

This was the only conviction obtained by Government. The trial of Horne Tooke ran a course unfavourable to Ministers, the evidence for the prosecution being flimsy in the extreme. Pitt himself was called to the witness-box, and when closely cross-questioned by Erskine as to his former connection with the Reform cause, admitted that he was present at a meeting at the Duke of Richmond's residence, at which delegates from county Reform Associations were present. The admission exposed him to the charge of inconsistency in the eyes of those who looked only at the surface of things. In reality, those who met at the Duke of Richmond's house had nothing in common with the democratic clubs which proposed to override the will of Parliament by a National Convention. Yet, as the superficial view gains a ready assent, the fame of Pitt now underwent an eclipse. Never again did he hear the whole-hearted acclaim which greeted him in the years 1784-90. The roar of delight which went up at the news of the acquittal of Horne Tooke was a sign of the advent of a new era, in whose aspirations Pitt had no part.

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[1] "Life of T. Hardy," 42; "State Trials," xxiv, 717, 729, 762, etc. The evidence fills 1,207 pages.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1-200.

The prosecutions against Bonney, Joyce, Kyd, and Holcroft were now dropped. The charge against Thelwall was pressed home, but resulted in another defeat for Government. Thus, except in the case of Watt, no proof was forthcoming of treasonable designs, though the apprehension of Davison of Sheffield might perhaps have led to discoveries of that nature. In the main, then, Pitt and his colleagues failed to justify the harsh measure of suspending the Habeas Corpus Act; and the failure of the State prosecutions led to a marked increase of the membership and activity of the London Corresponding Society, with results which will appear later.

Nevertheless, Pitt's conduct is far from indefensible with regard to the main point at issue, the meeting of a National Convention. In view of the projects of some of the wilder spirits at London, Sheffield, Norwich, and Edinburgh, it is presumptuous to charge him with causelessly seeking to bring about a "Reign of Terror." He was face to face with developments which might easily have become dangerous; and, with the example of Paris before him, he not unnaturally took what he thought to be the safer course, that of stopping them at the outset. Indeed, we may question whether Fox, had he been in power, would have allowed the assembling of a National Convention, pledged to press upon Parliament measures which he reprobated.

It is when we come to details that Pitt is open to the charge of acting with undue severity. Considering the proved loyalty of the great mass of the people, what need was there to inaugurate a system of arbitrary arrests? After all, England was not France. Here no systematic assault had been made on the institutions in Church and State. The constitution had suffered dilapidation, but it was storm-proof, and the garrison was strongly entrenched. Moreover, the democrats for the most part urged their case without any of the appeals to violence which wrought havoc in France. There the mob delighted to hurry a suspect to *la lanterne* and to parade heads on pikes. Here the mass meeting at Chalk Farm, or on Castle Hill, Sheffield, ended with loss neither of life nor of property. So far as I have found, not one life was taken by the people in the course of this agitation—a fact which speaks volumes for their religious sense, their self-restraint even amidst deep poverty, and, in general, their obedience to law even when they deemed it oppressive. The hero of the year 1794 is not William Pitt, but the British nation.

CHAPTER VIII

PITT AND THE ALLIES (1794-5)

The main object of His Majesty is the keeping together by influence and weight this great Confederation by which alone the designs of France can be resisted, and which, if left to itself, would be too likely to fall to pieces from the jarring interests of the Powers engaged in it.—GRENVILLE TO MALMESBURY, 21st April 1794.

The disgraceful failure of every military operation His Prussian Majesty has undertaken since the year 1791 has destroyed the reputation of the Prussian army; and the duplicity and versatility of his Cabinet put an end to all confidence and good faith.—MALMESBURY TO GRENVILLE, 20th September 1794.

AS in parliamentary life, so too in the wider spheres of diplomacy and warfare, a Coalition very rarely holds together under a succession of sharp blows. This is inherent in the nature of things. A complex or heterogeneous substance is easily split up by strokes which leave a homogeneous body intact. Rocks of volcanic origin defy the hammer under which conglomerates crumble away; and when these last are hurled against granite or flint, they splinter at once. Well might Shakespeare speak through the mouth of Ulysses these wise words on the divisions of the Greeks before Troy:

Look how many Grecian tents do stand
Hollow upon this plain, so many hollow factions.

. . . .

Troy in our weakness stands, not in her strength.[1]

Pitt and his colleagues were under no illusion as to the weakness of the first Coalition against France. They well knew the incurable jealousies of the Houses of Hapsburg and Hohenzollern, the utter weakness of the Holy Roman Empire, the poverty or torpor of Spain, Sardinia, and Naples, the potent distractions produced by the recent partition of Poland, and the Machiavellian scheme of the Empress Catharine II to busy the Central Powers in French affairs so that she might have a free hand at Warsaw. All this and much more stood revealed to them. But they grounded their hopes of success on two important considerations; first, that the finances of France were exhausted; secondly, that the rule of the Jacobins, fertile in forced loans, forced service, and guillotining, must speedily collapse. On the subject of French finance there are many notes in the Pitt Papers, which show that Pitt believed an utter breakdown to be imminent. Grenville, too, at the close of October 1793, stated that France had lost at least 200,000 soldiers, while more than 50,000 were in hospital. The repugnance to military service was universal, and the deficit for the month of August alone was close on £17,000,000.[1]

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[1] "Troilus and Cressida," act i, sc. 3.

Above all, Pitt and Grenville believed the French Government to be incompetent as well as exasperatingly cruel. In their eyes Jacobins were sworn foes to all that made government possible. The mistake was natural. The English Ministers knew little of what was going on in France, and therefore failed to understand that the desperadoes now in power at Paris were wielding a centralized despotism, compared with which that of Louis XIV was child's play. As to the Phœnix-like survival of French credit, it is inexplicable even to those who have witnessed the wonders wrought by Thiers in 1870-3. All that can be said is that the Jacobins killed the goose that laid the golden egg, and yet the golden eggs were laid. Let him who understands the miracle of revolutionary finance cast the first stone at Pitt.

The Prime Minister also erred when he believed the French social structure to be breaking up. Here again the miscalculation was perfectly natural in an age which regarded kings, nobles, and bishops as the fixed stars of a universe otherwise diversified only by a dim Milky Way. The French were the first to dispel these notions. In truth the strength of the young giant bore witness to the potency of the new and as yet allied forces—Democracy and Nationality. In 1792 Democracy girded itself eagerly against the semi-feudal Powers, Austria and

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 452.

Prussia; but the strength latent in the French people appeared only in the next year when, on the accession of England, Spain, and the Empire to the Coalition, plans were discussed of detaching Alsace, Lorraine, Roussillon, and Flanders.[1] To these sacrilegious schemes the French patriots opposed the dogma of Rousseau —the indivisibility of the general will. "Perish 25,000,000 Frenchmen rather than the Republic one and indivisible." This perfervid, if illogical, exclamation of a Commissioner of the Convention reveals something of that passion for unity which now fused together the French nation. Some peoples merge themselves slowly together under the shelter of kindred beliefs and institutions. Others again, after feeling their way towards closer union, finally achieve it in the explosion of war or revolution. The former case was the happy lot of the British nation; the latter, that of the French. Pitt, with his essentially English outlook, failed to perceive that the diverse peoples grouped together under the French monarchy had now attained to an indissoluble unity under the stress of the very blows which he and his Allies dealt in Flanders, Alsace, and Provence.

For by this time the counter-strokes dealt by the Republicans were telling with fatal effect on their adversaries. The failure of the Spanish campaign in Roussillon and the irruption of a French force into Catalonia dashed the spirits of that weak and wavering monarch, Charles IV; and already whispers were heard that peace with France was necessary. The disputes with England concerning Nootka Sound and affairs at Toulon predisposed the King and his people to think with less horror of the regicides of Paris. As for Sardinia, the childish obscurantism of the Court of Turin had nursed to quick life a mushroom growth of Jacobinism. The army defending the Alpine passes was honeycombed with discontent; and the suspicious conduct of Austria towards her little ally foreshadowed the divisions and disasters which quickly followed on the advent of Bonaparte at that theatre of the war.

It was clear that only from London could come the impulse which would invigorate this anaemic Coalition. Pitt sought to impart such an impulse in the King's Speech at the opening of the Session of 1794. It had throughout a defiant ring. The capture of three of the northern fortresses of France, the gains in the East and West Indies (they amounted to Pondicherry, Chandernagore, and Tobago, together with Miquelon and St. Pierre), the blow dealt to her navy at Toulon, and the impossibility of her continuing the recent prodigious exertions, were in turn duly emphasized. And on 21st January 1794, when Fox moved an amendment in favour of peace, the Prime Minister spoke even more strongly of the madness of coming to terms with the present rulers of France. Could any statesman not gifted with second sight have spoken otherwise? At that time the Reign of Terror was approaching its climax. The Goddess of Reason had lately been enthroned in Notre Dame amidst ribald songs and dances. The schism between Robespierre and the atheistical party was beginning to appear; and few persons believed that France would long bend the knee before the lords of the guillotine, whose resources were largely derived from the plunder of churches and banks, forced loans from the wealthy, and a graduated Income Tax resembling the Spartan proposals of Thomas Paine.

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[1] Thugut in the autumn of 1793 sketched a scheme for annexing the north of France from the Somme to Sedan.

In such a case Pitt naturally repeated his statement of the previous session, that he altogether deprecated a peace with France, unless it possessed some elements of permanence, and secured due indemnity to Great Britain. Nay, he declared that he would rather persevere with war, even in the midst of disasters, than come to terms with the present rulers of France, who were alike enemies of order and rabid foes of England. They drove men into battle by fear of the guillotine; they formed rapine and destruction into a system, and perverted to their detestable purposes all the talents and ingenuity derived from the civilization around them. He was careful, however, to correct the mis-statement of Fox, that the Government was struggling for the restoration of the French monarchy. While believing that that nation would live most happily under a King, Pitt denied that a restoration was the object of the present war. We have already seen that he held this view in his correspondence with the Austrian Court. The House supported Ministers by 277 votes to 59.

These declarations, backed by so large a majority, caused great satisfaction at Vienna, and heartened that Government in the midst of its many uncertainties. There was every need of encouragement. In that age, when the great monarchs of the eighteenth century had passed, or were passing, away, Francis II stood somewhat low among the mediocrities on whom fell the strokes of destiny. He was a poor replica of Leopold II. Where the father was supple and adroit, the son was perversely obstinate or weakly pliable. In place of foresight and tenacity in the pursuit of essentials, Francis was remarkable for a more than Hapsburg narrowness of view, and he lacked the toughness which had not seldom repaired the blunders of that House. Those counsellors swayed him most who appealed to his family pride, or satisfied his other dominant feelings, attachment to the old order of things and a pedantic clinging to established usages. But the weakness of his character soon became so patent as to excite general distrust, especially as he was swayed by the wayward impulses of his consort, a daughter of Ferdinand IV and Maria Carolina of Naples. From her mother she inherited a hatred of French principles and the bent towards intrigue and extravagance which wrecked the careers of that Queen and of her sister, Marie Antoinette. Francis II and his consort longed to stamp out the French plague; but they lacked the strength of mind and of will that commands success. Our special envoy at Vienna, Thomas Grenville, questioned whether the Emperor "had steadiness enough to influence the Government."

According to the same competent judge, the Chancellor Thugut was the only efficient Minister, being very laborious in his work, and indeed "the only man of business about the Court." [1] Yet Thugut was rather a clever diplomat and ideal head-clerk than a statesman. In forethought he did not much excel his master. Indeed, his personality and his position alike condemned him to aim at cheap and easy gains. His features and figure were mean. Worse still, he was of low birth, a crime in the eyes of nobles and courtiers who for nearly half a century had seen the prestige of the Chancery enhanced by the lordly airs and whims of Kaunitz. Fear of courtly intrigues ever obsessed the mind of Thugut; and thus, whenever the horizon darkened, this coast-hugging pilot at once made for the nearest haven. In particular, as the recovery of Belgium in the year 1793 brought no financial gain, but unending vistas of war, he sought other means of indemnity, and discovered them in Alsace-Lorraine,

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 628. So, too, Morton Eden wrote to Grenville on 1st January 1793: "The steadfastness of the Emperor does not equal his moral rectitude" ("F. O.," Austria, 32).

South Poland, and Venice. The first was a concession to the pride of the House of Hapsburg-Lorraine; but Thugut saw in Venetia and in the land south of Warsaw the readiest means of indemnifying Austria for the loss of her Belgic Provinces, which after the defeat of Wattignies (October 1793) he probably expected and welcomed.

In this orientation of Hapsburg policy Thugut did but follow the impulse first imparted by Hertzberg at Berlin. As we have seen, Frederick William II entered on the French war in one of his chivalrous moods, which passed away amidst the smoke of Valmy. The miseries of the retreat Rhinewards, and the incursion of the French into the valley of the Main taught him prudence, while the ease of his conquest of Great Poland early in the year 1793 assured the victory of statecraft over chivalry. Morton Eden reported from Berlin that, had the preparations for the Valmy campaign equalled in thoroughness those for the invasion of Poland, events must have gone very differently in Champagne. The circumspection with which the Prussians conducted the siege of Mainz in the summer of 1793, and the long delays of the autumn, have already been noticed. The result of it was that at Christmastide of the year 1793 Pichegru and Hoche threw back Wurmser in disastrous rout, and compelled Brunswick hurriedly to retire to the Rhine.

As always happens between discordant allies after defeats, Berlin and Vienna indulged in a war of words, amidst which the Coalition would probably have broken up but for the efforts of British diplomacy. The Pitt Ministry had despatched to Berlin the ablest of British diplomatists, Lord Malmesbury, with a view to strengthening the accord between the three Powers; and the mingled charm and authority of his presence did much to thwart the petty prejudices and intrigues prevalent at that capital. He took Brussels and Frankfurt on his way to Berlin, and his diary shows the listlessness or discontent which had infected the officers of the British army. Many of them openly brought against the Duke of York the most outrageous and unfounded charges, and it seems that about fifty of them went on furlough to England, where they spread those slanders and played into the hands of the Opposition.[1] Malmesbury's converse with the Duke and others at Ath convinced him that the commander-in-chief was striving manfully and generously against a situation full of difficulty.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 491; "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 17-19, 69

At Frankfurt, and again at Berlin, Malmesbury found signs that Frederick William was ashamed at the ignominious issue of the campaign, and professed a desire to take up the duties which the Duke of Brunswick had so haltingly fulfilled. The King seemed rather pleased than otherwise at the Austrian reverses in the north of Alsace, but by no means indisposed to renew the attack upon France, always provided that England paid him a sufficient subsidy. He assured the envoy that his *chef-d'œuvre*, the Triple Alliance of 1788, was still a reality, but he declared, on the faith of an honest man, that the state of Prussia's finances would not enable him to face a third campaign. In point of fact, out of the reserve fund of 80,000,000 crowns which Frederick the Great had handed on, only 20,000,000 or perhaps only 14,000,000 remained in the early days of 1794.[1]

Other difficulties beset the Prussian monarch. Want of work had driven the weavers of Silesia to a state of frenzy and tumult almost resembling a *Jacquerie*; and there and elsewhere serfs and peasants talked openly of casting off the restraints and burdens of Feudalism. In such a case the veriest autocrat must pause before he commits his country to the risks of a loan (that of 1792 had exhausted Prussia's credit), or to a campaign where the losses were certain and the gains doubtful. On this last topic various schemes had been bandied to and fro between Berlin and Vienna. The debt of honour certainly bade Frederick William help to secure to his rival a counterpart to Prussia's acquisitions in Poland; but, apart from this consideration and the need of stamping out the French pest in the Rhineland, the politicians of Berlin found few reasons for prolonging the war. What wonder, then, that they set on foot intrigues with the regicides of Paris? Marshal Möllendorf, the commander whom Frederick William substituted for the weary and disgusted Duke of Brunswick, proved to be a partisan of peace.[2]

Royalist at heart, but beset by advisers and mistresses who fanned his jealousy of Austria and love of ease, Frederick William wavered under the whims of the hour or the counsels of the last comer. Malmesbury thus summed up the question now at issue in his letter to Pitt of 9th January 1794: "Can we do without the King of Prussia or can we not? If we can, he is not worth the giving of a guinea for. If we cannot, I am afraid we cannot give too many." Malmesbury saw no means of keeping Frederick William steady up to the end of the war. Pitt and Grenville, however, devised the following expedient. They offered the sum of £2,000,000 for bringing 100,000 Prussians into the field. Of this sum Great Britain would furnish two fifths (or £800,000), and Austria and Holland each one fifth, the last fifth being advanced by Prussia herself until she reimbursed herself from France at the general peace. The device was suggestive of that of the rustic who tempts his beast of burden onwards by dangling a choice vegetable before his nose.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 494; "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 31, *et seq.*

[2] "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 50; Sorel, iv, 17.

Frederick William alone might have been attracted by the offer; but his advisers haggled long and obstinately over details. Chief among the objectors was a Councillor of State, Haugwitz, an oily, plausible creature, whose Gallophil leanings were destined finally to place his country under the heel of Napoleon and deal a death-blow to Pitt. For the present, he treated Malmesbury with a moderation and courtesy that deftly veiled a determined opposition. The British envoy was fully his match. Finding that Haugwitz ascribed all difficulties and delays to the Austrian embassy, he advised him to propose the transfer of the negotiations to The Hague, where these annoyances would cease. Vain and always prone to take the easiest course, Haugwitz swallowed the bait and succeeded in carrying a point which was all in Malmesbury's favour, especially as it saved time in communicating with Downing Street. After annoying delays they set out on 23rd March; and with the aid of twenty-two horses at each post traversed the 326 (English) miles to The Hague in 120 hours during the days, 23rd—30th March, when the campaign ought to have opened.

The prospects at Vienna were equally gloomy. Morton Eden's reports to Grenville form an unrelieved jeremiad. Even amidst the alarms caused by the disasters at Toulon and in the Palatinate, jealousy of Prussia was the dominant feeling. The utmost efforts of our ambassador failed to convince Francis II and Thugut of the need of humouring Prussia by meeting her demand for an additional subsidy and by guaranteeing bread and forage for the 20,000 men who formed her contingent in the Austrian service. Into these wearisome quarrels we need not enter, further than to note that they were envenomed by the acerbity of the Prussian ambassador at Vienna. The Marquis Lucchesini, born at Lucca in 1752, early entered the service of Frederick the Great, to whom he acted as reader. He advanced rapidly under his successor. His commanding demeanour and vivacity of speech, added to great powers of work, and acuteness in detecting the foibles of others, made him a formidable opponent. Further, his marriage with the sister of Bischoffswerder, until lately the King's favourite adviser, added to his influence, which, as was natural with a foreigner, inclined towards the attractive and gainful course. Long afterwards the saviour of Prussia, Baron vom Stein, classed him among the narrow, selfish, insincere men who had been the ruin of nations.[1] Certainly he helped to ruin Poland; and now his conduct at Vienna clogged the efforts of Morton Eden and Malmesbury to strengthen the Coalition against France. Eden complained that he behaved as an intriguing subaltern rather than as an ambassador; and rumour credibly ascribed his tortuous and exasperating conduct to French gold.

In the midst of his irritation against Prussia and her envoy, Thugut heard with astonishment the British proposals, presented at Berlin early in February, to bring 100,000 Prussians into the field. Urgently he remonstrated with Eden, pointing out that Prussia had played them false in two campaigns, and would do so again, witness her late contention that France must not be weakened. On no account, then, must Frederick William head a compact mass of 100,000 men in the Palatinate. He would be the arbiter of the situation. He would be between the Austrian army in Brabant and the Hapsburg States. Nay, he might march into Swabia, reach the Danube, take boats at Ulm, and, sailing down that stream, have Vienna at his mercy![2] So pressing were these anxieties that, at the close of February, Thugut sent a special request to Catharine II to guarantee the security of Austria's possessions in case Frederick William withdrew from the Coalition.

Despite the utmost efforts of the British Ministry and its envoys, no plan of vigorous co-operation could be arranged between the two German rivals; the sole link connecting them was the clause of the treaty of 1792, whereby Austria, as having been attacked by France, claimed the help of 20,000 Prussians.

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[1] Seeley, "Stein," i, 65.

[2] "F. O.," Austria, 36. Eden to Grenville, 15th and 27th February.

Frederick William decided that this force must remain at Mainz, in order to guard the Empire from a French raid. He promised 80,000 more troops to Great Britain and Holland, provided that they were paid for. On one point alone the four Allies came near to agreement, namely, that the main Prussian army should operate in Flanders, so as effectively to defend the Dutch territory, secure conquests in the North of France, and, above all, preclude the quarrels which must ensue if it acted near the Austrians.[1] Thugut of course assented, his great aim being to remove the Prussians as far as possible from Swabia. Disputes on these subjects went on up to the end of March 1794, the time when an advance into French Flanders promised great results.

The reader will naturally ask—Can this be called a Coalition? A Coalition implies some power of coalescing. But among the four Powers there was far more of disunion than union. In fact, England was the sole link between these wrangling confederates, and that, too, solely by means of what Carlyle called the cash nexus. Grenville, using a more homely metaphor, averred that the German princes turned towards England as an inexhaustible milch-cow. The animal in this case could dictate her terms; and thus the relations of the three Powers resembled those of a rich but somewhat exigent employer to grumbling and distrustful employees. Holland also, in return for her sacrifices in men and money, demanded from Austria a better frontier on the side of Dutch Flanders and Maestricht, to which the Viennese Court opposed a quiet but firm resistance.

It speaks volumes for the confidence inspired by Pitt and Grenville, and for the tactful zeal of Malmesbury and Eden, that they induced the German rivals to make one more effort. The Duke of York also played an important part in the formation of the plan of campaign; for he it was who persuaded Colonel Mack to accompany him to London, and there discuss with Ministers the alternative schemes. The mention of Mack will excite surprise among those who know of him only by the futile Neapolitan campaign of 1799, and the frightful disaster of Ulm. In regard to strategy and the theory of war he displayed much ability; and his administrative talents and energy as Quarter-Master-General in 1793 should have screened him from the criticism that he discoursed brilliantly on war in *salons*, and in the council rhetorically developed specious and elegant plans.[2]

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 81, 82.

[2] Sorel, iv, 12.

Mack's plan of operations was first submitted to the judgement of the Archduke Charles, the Prince of Coburg, Count Mercy, the Prince of Orange, and the Duke of York, at Brussels. Next, he proceeded, along with Counts Starhemberg and Merveldt to London, and on 13th February unfolded his plan to Pitt, Grenville, and Dundas. The Duke of York had preceded him by two days, but was absent from this conference. It became piquant when Pitt "playfully" remarked to Mack that a great general had recently arrived at London whose appointment to the command of the British force in Flanders would doubtless meet with his warm approval. After a little more fencing, Pitt gave the name of the Marquis Cornwallis, who had just returned from his Viceroyalty in India. Mack by no means welcomed the proposal, and made the irreverent remark that the best General, after fighting elephants in India, would be puzzled by the French. Pitt thereupon observed that the Duke of York had not the confidence of the army, to which Mack and Merveldt replied by praising his character, and decrying his critics as a set of influential but inexperienced youths.

The matter then dropped, and the Duke was present at the conference on the morrow. Finally, Austria and England bound themselves to make great efforts, the latter with at least 40,000 men, either British or German auxiliaries. The Prussian and Dutch forces were to be increased so as to bring the grand total to 340,000 men. Of this large number 170,000 were to operate in Flanders with a view to a march on Paris; 35,000 held the country along the right bank of the Meuse; 15,000 protected Luxemburg; 65,000 Prussians prolonged the line eastwards to the Rhine, which was guarded by 55,000 Austrians. Certainly the plan called for a third of a million of men, if all the frontier strongholds of Flanders were to be taken before the march to Paris began. In regard to details, Pitt, Grenville, and Dundas urged that Cornwallis should command the British and subsidiary forces defending West Flanders—a suggestion which George III warmly approved, on condition that the Duke of York, serving with the main body nearer the centre of the long line, had a number of troops proportionate to his rank and talents.

Thus the effort of Pitt and his colleagues to shelve the Duke of York was foiled. On another and weightier matter he had his way. Coburg's conduct had been so languid and unenterprising as to lead to urgent demands for his recall; and it was understood that the Emperor Francis would take the command, with Mack as Chief-of-Staff and virtual director of the campaign. Pitt expressed to Mack his marked preference of this arrangement to the alternative scheme, the appointment of the Archduke Charles; for the extreme youth of the Archduke might hinder a good understanding between him and his subordinate and senior, the Duke of York. Seeing, then, that Mack declined absolutely to serve under Coburg,[1] nothing but the presence of the Emperor could end the friction in Flanders.

But alas for the monarchical cause! At the very time when the Kaiser was to set out for Brussels, alarming news came from Cracow. The temper of the Poles, heated by the wrongs and insults of two years, burst forth in a rising against the Russian and Prussian authorities. Kosciusko, the last hope of Poland, issued an appeal which nerved his countrymen to dare the impossible. Rushing to arms, they astonished the world by exhibiting in the last throes of their long agony a strength which, if put forth in 1791, might have saved their land from spoliation. Even now their despairing struggles turned towards Warsaw much of the energy which should have trended towards Paris; and thus, once again, and not for the last time, did the foul crimes of 1772 and 1793 avenge themselves on their perpetrators. The last struggles of Poland helped on the French Republic to its mighty adolescence. Finally, on 2nd April, Francis II departed for Brussels. Thugut set out nine days later; and in the interval, on the plausible pretext that Prussia would seize more Polish land, he stopped the reinforcements destined for Flanders. He also urged the Czarina on no account to allow a partition of Poland.[2]

While the Continental States were thus pulling different ways, British diplomacy won two notable triumphs at The Hague. By dint of threatening Haugwitz with the rupture of the whole negotiation, Malmesbury induced that Minister to countermand the order for the retirement of the Prussian troops, which had already begun. He thereby saved the Allies in the Palatinate and Flanders from very serious risks in view of the gathering masses of the French.[1] Further, on 19th April, he induced Haugwitz to sign a treaty which promised to revivify the monarchical cause. Prussia agreed to furnish, by 24th May, 62,400 men, who were to act conjointly with the British and Dutch forces in Flanders. For this powerful succour the two Maritime States would pay a subsidy of £50,000 a month, besides the cost of bread and forage, reckoned at £1 12*s.* per man per month, and £300,000 for initial expenses. As Great Britain and Holland wholly supported this army, they prescribed the sphere of its operations, and retained any conquests that it might make. The treaty was for the year 1794; but its renewal was stipulated in a separate article. Prussia of course still supplied to Austria the 20,000 men due by the treaty of 1792.

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[1] Vivenot, iii, 89-96; "Dropmore P.," ii, 505-7.

[2] "F. O.," Austria, 36, Eden to Grenville, 31st March, 9th April. See, too, Vivenot, iii, 172, for proofs that Kosciusko sought to delay the rising, and looked to Vienna for help against Russia and Prussia.

If Malmesbury had not induced Haugwitz to sign the treaty then, it would never have been signed at all. Almost alone in the Court of Berlin, Frederick William desired to continue the struggle. His uncle, Prince Henry, had always opposed war with France, and long before Valmy, had prophesied that her untrained but enthusiastic levies would be a match for any professional army. His influence and that of the Duke of Brunswick, Lucchesini, and Möllendorf, were still cast against the western crusade, so that Grenville believed Prussia to be dragging on the negotiation solely in order to embarrass her Allies by throwing it up early in the campaign.[2] Moreover, Malmesbury's treaty contained its own death warrant. A Great Power can ill afford to hire out its troops to non-military States, unless they lessen the humiliation of such a proceeding by according the utmost possible freedom. But the Hague Convention specified that the subsidized Prussian army must operate where the paymasters directed; and they now decided on removing it from the Palatinate to the valley of the Meuse near Dinant, or even further west, provided that Austria could fill up the gap thus left in the Palatinate.[3] In passing, I may note that this important decision was due to George III, as appears in Grenville's final instruction to Malmesbury: "The King's determination is finally taken not to agree to any plan by which the Prussians would be employed more to the left than the country of the Meuse."[4] No one who knows the rigour of the King's resolves can doubt that he was responsible for a determination fraught with unexpected issues.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 85, 89.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 516.

[3] "F. O.," Prussia, 33. Grenville to Malmesbury, 21st April.

[4] *Ibid.*, Same to same, 23rd May.

It is alien to my purpose to recount the ensuing disputes. I can glance only at the part played by Pitt. At one point his conduct was weak and dilatory. Early in May, when Malmesbury proceeded to London for the purpose of securing the ratification of the treaty and the payment of the first subsidy to Prussia, he encountered most annoying delays. Pitt and Grenville left him severely alone, probably because they were then so occupied with the coercion of the English Jacobins as to have no time for the plans which promised the overthrow of the French Jacobins. Another topic engaging their attention was the hoped-for coalition with the Portland Whigs, which shrouded from their gaze the needs of the European Coalition. However we may explain the fact, it is certain that during sixteen days (6th to 22nd May) Malmesbury, despite his urgent entreaties to Grenville, could procure neither instructions as to his future conduct, nor a promise for the payment of the first Prussian subsidy. News of a British disaster in Flanders at last quickened the laggards of Whitehall. On the 23rd Malmesbury gained his heart's desire, and set out for the Prussian headquarters on the following day.[1] Meanwhile, owing to this long delay (one of the most discreditable incidents in the careers of Pitt and Grenville), Prussia took no steps to carry out the terms of the compact. It so happened that on 24th May her army in the Palatinate, commanded by Möllendorff, gained a victory over the French at Kaiserslautern in the Palatinate; but that event set them the more against Malmesbury's treaty, which implied a march of some 120 miles through difficult country, and across an enemy's front.

Moreover, as has been hinted, reverses had by this time overtaken the right wing of the Allies, in West Flanders. At the centre, near the Sambre, the campaign opened with promise, the British cavalry gaining a brilliant success at Bethencourt. But Carnot, having drawn upon the French troops in Lorraine and the Palatinate, threw his heaviest columns at points on the extreme west of the French front, the result being that at Turcoing the Republicans shattered the isolated corps of the Duke of York and General Otto (18th May). The successes of the Prussians and of the Austrian army, on the Sambre, saved the situation for a time. But the prospects even in that quarter were overclouded by the resolve of the Emperor Francis to leave his army and return to Vienna. News of the critical state of affairs in Poland prompted this decision, the results of which soon appeared in quarrels at headquarters and discouragement in the rank and file. The Austrian soldiery saw in the withdrawal of the Kaiser the end of his rule in the Netherlands. They were right. The counsels of Thugut had now prevailed. South Poland was to be the prize of the Hapsburgs. The tiresome and distant Netherlands were to be given up, the pecuniary support of England, however, being assured as far as possible by a feint of defending them.

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 96.

Here we have the explanation of the half-hearted effort made by the Austrians at Fleurus. There was every reason why Coburg, now again the commander of the main Austrian force, should strike vigorously at the French force besieging Charleroi. A decisive victory in front of Charleroi would not only save that place, but would give pause to the French forces further west, now advancing rapidly towards Ghent. Accordingly Coburg, advancing as far as Fleurus, hard by the village of Ligny, attacked the Republicans. He had on the whole the best of the fight, when the arrival of news of the surrender of Charleroi led him most tamely to call off his men and fall back. The retirement took place in discreditably good order, not a single gun being lost (25th June 1794). A bold leader would have beaten the enemy and probably would have saved Charleroi. With the same excess of prudence Coburg conducted his retreat, several positions and strongholds being abandoned in craven fashion.

Meanwhile Pitt and Dundas made great efforts to save West Flanders. In haste they despatched reinforcements to Ostend; and among the regiments which landed there on 25th and 26th June was the 33rd, commanded by Colonel Wellesley. The future Duke of Wellington found the small garrison of Ostend in a state of panic; and his chief, the Earl of Moira, deemed it best to meet the French in the open. By great good fortune Moira, with most of the regiments, reached Bruges, and beyond that town came into touch with Clerfait's force. Wellesley, taking ship, sailed round to Antwerp and reached that column by a safer route and earlier than his chief. His action is characteristic of a judgement that never erred, a will that never faltered. In this campaign, as he afterwards said, he learnt how not to make war. But success not seldom crowns the efforts of him who has the good sense to probe the causes of failure. Certainly it rarely comes to British commanders save after very chastening experiences; and Wellesley now took part in what was, for the Austrians, a fore-ordained retreat. Despite the manly appeals of the Duke of York, Coburg declined to make a stand on the fateful ridge of Mount St. Jean; and the name of Waterloo appears in the tepid records of 1794 at the head of a plan for arranging the stages of the retreat (5th July) which the nervousness of Coburg soon condemned to the limbo of unfulfilled promises.[1] Is it surprising that, two days later, the Duke of York declared to him that the British were "betrayed and sold to the enemy"? Worse still, the garrisons of Valenciennes, Condé, Quesnoy, and Landrecies, amounting to nearly 11,000 men, were now left to their fate.

Indirectly Pitt and Dundas were responsible for these disasters. They weakened the British force in Flanders by sending large drafts to the West Indies, as will in due course appear. They also allowed Corsica to be occupied in the spring of 1794, and yet they made little or no use of that island for expeditions against the Riviera, which the royalist natives would readily have undertaken under an inspiring leader. They also relied too much on the Austrians and Prussians, though the former were known to care little for their Netherlands, apart from the prospect of gaining the Barrier fortresses of French Flanders in order to further the Belgic-Bavarian exchange. Above all, as we have seen, Pitt's conduct towards Prussia was annoyingly halting. Malmesbury's treaty could have no effect unless it led the Prussians to move at once. The delay of sixteen days at Whitehall must rank as one of the causes of the failures just recounted; and though Grenville was technically guilty, Pitt must be blamed for not ensuring the needful despatch in an all-important decision. It is curious that he never realized his responsibility. Speaking at a later date of the campaign of Fleurus, he said that it turned upon as narrow a point as ever occurred: that England was unfortunate, but the blame did not rest with her.[2] This probably refers to the surrender of Charleroi and the retreat from Fleurus. But Pitt did not understand that the timely advent of part of the Prussian force on the Meuse, or even its advance into Lorraine, would have changed the situation; and for their inactivity he was in some measure responsible.

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[1] "W. O.," I, 169. See an admirable article in the "United Service Mag." (Aug. 1897), by Colonel E. M. Lloyd, founded on the papers of General Sir James Craig, Adjutant-General of the Duke of York.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxxii, 1132

At times Pitt lived in dreamland. On 15th July, while the Austrians were quietly withdrawing from Central Belgium, he drew up a Memorandum as to the course of events. By the close of the year Austria was to bring 100,000 men into Flanders, a close alliance being framed on the basis of her acquisition of the French border districts (Valenciennes had not yet surrendered). England was to retain all conquests in the two Indies. The Prussians were to march towards Flanders, which they obstinately refused to do. Dutch and other troops were to be engaged by England, the presumption being that the year 1795 would see the losses of 1794 more than retrieved. The mistake of 10,000 in adding up the totals of the troops (78,000 instead of 88,000) enables one to conjecture at what time of the day this sketch was outlined.[1] One would not take it seriously had not the Foreign Office soon despatched Earl Spencer and Mr. Thomas Grenville as special envoys to Vienna to propose very similar plans, Austria being urged on by the prospect of acquiring the French Barrier fortresses from Lille to Sedan.[2]

They aroused in Thugut a spirit of greed, not of honourable emulation. In a private letter to Pitt, dated Vienna 16th August, Spencer warned him that that Government was "neither possessed of sufficient energy and vigour, nor sufficiently actuated by the true principles on which the cause in which we are engaged ought to be conducted" to justify the demands of Thugut. They included British subsidies for Austria, though she could well support the war, and the sacrifice of British maritime conquests at the general peace as a means of ensuring the recovery of her losses on land. As to Belgium, added Spencer, Thugut looked on it "as irrecoverably lost and not worth regaining, unless with the addition of a very strong and extended barrier, composed of fortresses which he to-day plainly told us he did not think there was the least chance of taking in the course of the war, but that they must be obtained as cessions from France at the peace.[3] Thus Thugut expected that, while the Austrians were ignominiously evacuating the Netherlands, the British fleet should win French colonies valuable enough to induce France both to retire from Belgium, and to surrender to Austria her northern fortresses from Lille to Sedan or Thionville.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 599. [2] "F. O.," Austria, 38. Despatch of 19th July.

[3] Pitt MSS., 180. See, too, "Dropmore P.," ii, 617-20, 626.

The capture of Valenciennes and the slaughter of the *émigrés* in the Austrian garrison was the retort of the French to these day-dreams (29th August). The fall of Robespierre a month earlier, and the enhanced authority now enjoyed by Carnot enabled the authorities at Paris to press on the conquest of Belgium with an energy which set at defiance the boyish miscalculations of Pitt and the wavering plans of the Hapsburgs.

Towards the close of July Pitt and Grenville saw the need of abating the rigour of their demands on Prussia. For of what use was it to move 60,000 Prussians more than 100 miles to defend West Flanders when that province was lost? Malmesbury therefore was empowered to pay the monthly subsidy of £50,000 on behalf of Great Britain and Holland, provided that Möllendorf's army attacked the French about Trèves, thus lessening the pressure on Coburg's left wing. On 27th July he framed such an agreement with Hardenberg. This statesman was destined to be one of the saviours of the Prussian State in its darkest days, 1810-12; but now, as always, his conduct was shifty; and it is questionable whether he, any more than Haugwitz, dealt honourably with England. It must suffice to say that Möllendorf made not even a demonstration towards Trèves. His inactivity was in part due to the withdrawal of several regiments towards Poland, though Great Britain and Holland still paid for the maintenance of the full quota on the Rhine.

So flagrant was the breach of faith as to elicit heated protests from Malmesbury; and Pitt, justly indignant at the use of British money for what was virtually a partition of Poland, decided to remonstrate with Jacobi, the Prussian ambassador at London. Summoning him to Downing Street, at the end of September, he upbraided him with this dishonourable conduct, declaring that, unless the Prussians moved forward at once, the British and Dutch subsidy for October would be withheld. Much as we may sympathize with this indignant outburst, we must pronounce it unwise. For firstly, Pitt was intruding upon the sphere of Grenville in making this declaration, which was far more acrid than the despatches of the Foreign Secretary.

Secondly, it was made in the presence of Dundas, with whom Grenville was already on bad terms. Is it surprising that the Foreign Secretary wrote sharply to Pitt protesting against his acting on a line different from that previously taken at Downing Street? In his despatch of 30th September to Berlin, Grenville was careful to make the withdrawal of the subsidy strictly conditional, and his protest was probably less sharp than that which Pitt addressed to Jacobi.

So annoyed was Grenville at Pitt's interference during his own temporary absence that he wrote to express his willingness to retire from the Foreign Office if this would solve the difficulties caused by the appointment of Earl Fitzwilliam to the Irish Viceroyalty. To that topic I shall recur in a later chapter on the Irish troubles which now became acute. Here it must suffice to say that Pitt declined to accept Grenville's offer, and affairs at Downing Street righted themselves.[1] But at Berlin the mischief was irremediable. Jacobi, a born intriguer, and ever hostile to England, represented the words of Pitt in the worst possible light. Accordingly Frederick William affected great indignation at the conduct of Pitt, accused him of ending the alliance, and discovered in his own ruffled feelings the pretext for giving rein to the dictates of self-interest. He gave orders to end the campaign on the Rhine; and though Grenville sought to patch matters up, compromise was clearly impossible between Allies who had lost that mutual confidence which is the only lasting guarantee of treaties.

At the autumnal equinox of 1794 Pitt was confronted by a far more serious crisis than at the beginning of the war in February 1793. The Republicans, after throwing back Clerfait beyond the River Roer, towards Aix-la-Chapelle, compelled the Duke of York to abandon the natural line of defence of Holland, the River Waal; and in the early days of October the British retired behind Bergen-op-zoom and other Dutch fortresses. These were found to be totally unprepared to sustain a siege. The sluggishness of the Orange party, dominant in Holland since 1787, stood in marked contrast to the eagerness of the Dutch Patriots to help the invaders. Consequently in a few weeks the friends of the Stadholder saw their hopes fade away.

[1] See "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters" for Grenville's letters. Pitt was the guest of Grenville at Dropmore at the end of November 1794 ("Buckingham P.," ii, 319).

There was but one chance of rescue. The Duke of Brunswick, who so skilfully led the Prussians to Amsterdam in 1787, might be expected to impart some courage to the Dutch garrisons and some show of discipline to the disordered relics of York's and Clerfait's forces now drifting slowly northwards. His position as a Field-Marshal of the Prussian army also promised to interest the Court of Berlin in recovering some part, at least, of the supremacy of the Allies in the Dutch Netherlands. As the crisis in Holland had served to unite the two great Protestant Powers, so now it might prevent the dissolution of that salutary compact. Further, George III, though greatly disliking the substitution of Cornwallis for the Duke of York, favoured the appointment of the veteran Brunswick to the supreme command. Family considerations, always very strong in the King, here concurred with reasons of state. Not only had Brunswick married the sister of George III; but their daughter, the Princess Caroline, was now the reluctant choice of the Prince of Wales. The parents, both at Windsor and at Brunswick welcomed the avowal by the royal prodigal of the claims of lawful wedlock. The Duchess of Brunswick fell into raptures at the brilliant prospects thus opened out for her daughter; and it seemed that both Hymen and Mars, for once working in unison, conspired to bring from his inglorious retreat at Brunswick the man whom that age still acclaimed as its war-lord.

Malmesbury therefore proceeded to Brunswick for the double purpose of arranging the marriage and urging the Duke to take the command of the allied forces on the Lower Rhine. Overjoyed at leaving the atmosphere of intrigue at Möllendorf's headquarters, the envoy journeyed into the northern plain in hopes of assuring the safety of part of Holland. Early in November Pitt and his colleagues received a refusal from the Duke, but now they sent through Malmesbury an offer to subsidize a corps of 20,000 or 30,000 Austrians in that quarter. These, along with the British, Hanoverian, and Hessian troops, when marshalled by Brunswick, might surely be trusted to stay the French advance. The crisis was momentous. Brunswick well understood that in reality the fate of North Germany was at stake; for the French, if masters of the Rhine and Ems valleys, could easily overrun the northern plain, including his own duchy. Self-interest, pride in the German name, hatred of French principles, and, finally, satisfaction at the marriage alliance, bade the Duke draw his sword before it was too late.

But here again the malign influence of Berlin thwarted the plans of Pitt. In vain did Malmesbury ply the Duke with arguments and the Duchess with compliments. On 25th November the Duke informed him that, as a Prussian Field-Marshal, he was bound to consult Frederick William: and "the answer he had received was not of a nature which allowed him to accept of an offer otherwise so highly honourable and flattering to him." He then handed to the envoy his formal refusal.[1]

Whether the elderly Duke of Brunswick could have withstood the impetuous onset of the ill-clad, half-starved, but unconquerable peasants now following the French tricolour in its progress through Holland, who shall say? The exploits of Pichegru and his levies border on the miraculous until we remember that half of the Dutch laboured on their behalf, while the troops of York and Clerfait distrusted or despised those leaders. This consideration it was that led Pitt to take a step which he deemed most necessary for the public service as well as for the reputation of the Duke of York. On Sunday, 23rd November, he wrote at Holwood a very lengthy letter to the King, setting forth most deferentially the reasons which impelled him and his colleagues to request the withdrawal of the Duke from Holland.[2] He touched with equal skill and firmness on the unfortunate feeling prevalent in the army respecting the Duke of York; and, while eulogizing His Royal Highness, expressed the conviction of the Cabinet that, in his own interests as well as those of the country he should be recalled from a sphere of action where the difficulties were wellnigh insuperable. Pitt also suggested to the King the advisability of transferring the British forces to a more promising sphere, Brittany or la Vendée. The King's answer evinced considerable irritation, a proof that he saw little but the personal aspects of the case. Pitt, however, held to his point, and the Duke was recalled in order to become a little later commander-in-chief, a position for which he was far better suited than for a command in the field. At the close of the year Pitt showed his regard for the public service by requesting from the King leave to displace his brother, the Earl of Chatham, from the Admiralty, where his lethargy had several times hindered the naval operations. Lord Spencer became First Lord, the Earl of Chatham succeeding to Spencer's position as Lord Privy Seal.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 35. Malmesbury to Grenville, 25th November 1794.

[2] See "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters" for this letter.

Pitt's magnanimous resolve to brave the royal displeasure rather than keep a royal prince in a situation for which he was unfit met with general approval. The times were too serious to admit of pedantic trifling or unmanly shrinking. In quick succession there arrived news of the definite refusal of the Duke of Brunswick to come forward, of the incredible apathy of the Dutch, and of the demoralization of the Allies in their continued retreat. To add to their misfortunes, nature gripped that land of waters in a severe frost, so that the Dutch loyalists were unable, even if they had the hardihood, to let loose the floods against the invaders. In endless swarms these pressed on from the South, determined now to realize Dumouriez' dream of conquering Holland in order to appropriate its resources, pecuniary, naval, and colonial. Pichegru it was who won immortal fame by this conquest, which in truth needs not the legendary addition of his cavalry seizing a Dutch squadron in the Zuyder Zee. A singular incident attended the journey of Malmesbury with the future Princess of Wales towards Helvoetsluys, on their way to England. Unaware of the inroads of the French horse, they had to beat a speedy retirement, which, unfortunately for the Prince of Wales, placed them out of reach of the raiders. A little later the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick were fain to pack up their valuables and leave their capital in haste.

Such was the French conquest of Holland and part of Hanover in the winter of 1794-5. So speedy was it that Pitt and Dundas took no timely means to ensure the carrying off the Dutch fleet. As no small part of it was loyal to the Prince of Orange, who now fled to England, the oversight is to be censured. Surely Flushing or the Brill could have been secured. The Cabinet, however, as we shall see later, prepared to rescue from the general ruin the most valuable of the Dutch colonies, the Cape of Good Hope, the importance of which, for the safety of India, Pitt and Dundas rated most highly. Meanwhile, under the command of Abercromby, Harcourt, Cathcart, and Walmoden, the British and subsidized German forces fell back towards the River Ems, and thence to the Weser. Pitt, as we have seen, desired to recall the British regiments for service in the West of France. But various considerations told against this plan; and, as will appear later, the King obstinately opposed the withdrawal of the British cavalry from the confines of his beloved Electorate until the autumn of 1795. In April of that year the infantry, now reduced to some 6,000 effectives by the rigours of winter, embarked at Bremen.

Thus ended an expedition unprecedentedly fatal to the British arms. The causes of the disaster are not far to seek. The campaigns of 1793-4 were undertaken heedlessly, in reliance upon the strength of a Coalition which proved to have no strength, and upon the weakness of the French Republic which proved to be unconquerably strong. The Allies were powerful enough to goad France to fury, too weak to crush its transports. Their ill-concealed threats of partition bound France to the cause of the Jacobins, which otherwise she would have abjured in horror. Thus the would-be invaders drove France in upon herself, compelled her to organize her strength to the utmost; and that strength, when marshalled by Carnot, was destined to shatter the Coalition and overrun neighbouring lands. She then learnt the fatal secret that she could conquer Europe.

In a later chapter I propose to survey Pitt's conduct as War Minister. Here I need only point out that his mistakes resulted mainly from his unquenchable hopefulness. A singular proof of this admirable but dangerous quality is seen in his effort during the months of February and March 1795 to frame one more plan of co-operation with the Court of Berlin, which had so cynically deceived him. To this proposal Grenville offered unflinching opposition, coupled with a conditional threat to resign. Pitt persuaded him to defer action until the troubles in Ireland were less acute. But the King finally agreed with Pitt, and Grenville was on the point of retiring when news arrived of the defection of Prussia.[1] For some time she had been deep in negotiations with France, which had the approval of Möllendorf and the officers of her Rhenish army.[2] The upshot of it all was a treaty, which Hardenberg signed with the French envoy at Basle on 5th April 1795. By this discreditable bargain Frederick William of Prussia enabled France to work her will on the lands west of the Rhine, on condition of his acquiring a general ascendancy over North and Central Germany, which now became neutral in the strife. Austria and the South German States remained at war with France for two years longer, by which time the tottering Germanic System fell beneath the sword of Napoleon Bonaparte.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," iii, 26-30, 50, 57.

[2] Ranke, "Hardenberg," i, 258; "Paget P.," i, 95, *et seq.*

Prussia's bargain with France marks a reversion to her traditional policy, which viewed that Power as the friend and Austria as the enemy. It undid the life-work of Prince Kaunitz, now nearing his end at Vienna, and left the Hapsburg States enfeebled. True, they had a profitable share in the third and last Partition of Poland, which soon ensued; but this scarcely made good the loss in prestige due to the undisputed hegemony of Prussia in the greater part of Germany. The House of Hohenzollern, impelled by men like Lucchesini, Haugwitz, and Hardenberg, took the easy and profitable course and plumed itself on over-reaching its secular rival at Vienna. In reality it sealed the doom not only of the truly conservative policy of Pitt, but of the European fabric. Prussia it was which enabled the Jacobins to triumph and to extend their sway over neighbouring lands. The example of Berlin tempted Spain three months later to sign degrading terms of peace with France, and thus to rob England of her gains in Hayti and Corsica. Thanks to Prussia and Spain, France could enter upon that career of conquest in Italy which assured the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte and the temporary ruin of Austria. The mistakes of Pitt were great; but, after all, they might have been retrieved were it not for the torpor of the Viennese Court and the treachery of Prussia.

CHAPTER IX

THE WEST INDIES

Unfortunately, the war was carried on on the old principle of almost undivided attention to what was termed British interests—that is, looking to and preferring the protection of trade and the capture of the enemy's colonial establishments rather than to the objects which had involved Great Britain in the contest with France.—COLONEL THOMAS GRAHAM'S *Diary*.

IF we try to picture the course of the war as mapped out by Pitt, it would probably have appeared somewhat as follows. Great Britain, after lending to the Dutch a few regiments as a protection against the threatened raid of Dumouriez, withdraws them, leaving the Dutch and the subsidized German corps to guard the rear of the legions of Prussia and Austria during their conquering march to Paris. England, in the meantime, harasses the coasts of France, thereby compelling her to detain considerable forces at the important points, and further cripples her by sweeping her fleets and merchantmen from the sea and seizing her colonies.

In short, Pitt's conception of the true function of Great Britain in a continental war was based on that of his father, who accorded comparatively little military aid to Frederick the Great even in his direst need, but helped him indirectly by subsidies and by naval expeditions that stalemated no small portion of the French army. If Chatham's tactics succeeded when Prussia was striving against France, Austria, and Russia, how much more might Pitt hope to win a speedy triumph over anarchic France during her struggle with Austria, Prussia, Spain, Naples, Sardinia, and Holland? He expected, and he had a right to expect, that these States would need British money, not British troops, while the Sea Power restricted its operations to a "minor offensive" along the seaboards of France and her colonies. Pitt's efforts in this direction were constantly thwarted by the drain of men to Flanders; but his letters to Murray, Chief of Staff to the Duke of York, evince his anxiety to strike at Toulon and the West Indies, and not merely to lighten the military duties of Austria and Prussia on the French borders.[1] It would be tedious to recount his various attempts to prepare an expedition for the West Indies.[2] Of more interest are the requests for protection which he received from the French colonists of Hayti, the western part of the great island of San Domingo.

As appeared in Chapter XX of the former volume, the decrees of the National Assembly of Paris fired the negroes of the French West Indies with the resolve to claim the liberty and equality now recklessly promised by the mother-land. The white settlers, on the contrary, having recently acquired autonomous rights, disputed the legality of that levelling legislation, and rejected all authority but that of Louis XVI. Amidst the ensuing strifes, the chief colonies, especially Hayti, were menaced by that most horrible of all commotions, a servile revolt, when, most opportunely, help arrived from Jamaica. The contrast between the timely succour of England and the reckless iconoclasm of Paris struck the imagination of the French settlers, and the Assembly of Hayti forthwith drew up a declaration, setting forth the illegality of the French decrees, the miseries resulting from them, and the resolve of the colonists to sever a connection absolutely fatal to their welfare. Citing the example of the United States fifteen years before, and recounting the misdeeds of the mother country, they proclaimed to the world the justice of the act of severance.

A copy of this declaration, signed by de Cadusey on 27th September 1791, was sent forthwith to Pitt, with a request for the protection of Great Britain. He received it at Burton Pynsent on 27th October.[3] One of the chief delegates from Hayti was de Charmilly, who on 14th November sought an interview with Pitt, and a fortnight later wrote to him, earnestly begging the help of the only nation which could avert ruin from those islands. France, he declared, had passed a decree of blood against her own colonies and was powerless to stop its effects. The National Assembly, having by its annexation of Avignon recognized the right of that papal district to belong to whom it would, Hayti of equal right now voted for union with England. He further advised that its ports should remain open to all nations, a course of action which would herald the dawn of commercial and political freedom among the Spanish colonies of the New World.[1] These alluring prospects failed to entice Pitt from the strict neutrality to which he had pledged himself. So far was he from desiring to profit by the misfortunes of France, as the French princes first, and after them the Jacobins, maliciously asserted.

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[1] See "Eng. Hist. Rev.," October 1909.

[2] "Dropmore P.," ii, 395, 438, 443, 444, 464

[3] Pitt MSS., 349.

Once more the deputies of France flung the torch of discord across the Atlantic. By their decree of 4th April 1792 they declared absolute equality of rights between whites, half-castes, and blacks, and sent out commissioners to enforce this anarchic fiat. They forthwith took the side of the rebels, who in Toussaint l'Ouverture found a leader of terrible force of will. Martinique and Guadeloupe and the smaller islands were also a prey to civil war. In sheer desperation the planters and merchants of Guadeloupe sent over a delegate, Curt, to appeal to the British Government for protection. Lord Hawkesbury accorded to him an informal interview in the closing days of 1792. Curt pressed him for official help, without which his fellow colonists must lose their lives and property, and declared that he and many others abjured the name of Frenchmen.[2] Malouet, once prominent in the National Assembly and destined to become famous under Napoleon, also approached our Ministers, but with more caution. He knew that in some of the islands the Republic had many adherents; but after the outbreak of war in February 1793 he too advocated the sovereignty of Great Britain under certain conditions, and on behalf of the colonists of Hayti signed a compact with Dundas to that effect.

Fear of a revolt of the slaves had induced Ministers to send out reinforcements, so that, early in 1793, 19 battalions were in the British West Indies. In the month of April a small British force easily captured Tobago and restored that valuable little island to Great Britain. An attack on Martinique at midsummer was, however, a failure. These attempts, it may be noted, were made with forces already in the West Indies.[3] Pitt and Dundas have been severely blamed for sending further reinforcements to the West Indies.[4] But a letter which Pitt wrote to Grenville some time in June or July 1793 shows that the news of a French expedition having set sail to the West Indies, escorted by six or seven sail-of-the-line from Brest, led him to urge the despatch of a force for the protection of that important group of colonies.[1]

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[1] Pitt MSS., 121.

[2] "F. O.," France, 40.

[3] Malouet, "Méms.," ii, 209-11; Morse Stephens, "French Rev.," ii, 481-4; "Dropmore P.," ii, 388.

[4] Fortescue, iv, pt. i, 77, 78.

Besides, was a forward policy in the West Indies unwise? In these days it is hard to realize the value of those islands. The mention of Hayti conjures up a vision as of a ship manned by gorillas; for there and in Liberia is seen the proneness of the negroes to aimless lounging varied by outbursts of passion. But in the year 1789 Hayti far surpassed Jamaica in wealth and activity. The French possessed only the western third of the island; but the Spanish portion to the east was far less fertile, and far worse cultivated. The French genius for colonization was seen in the excellent system of irrigation carried on in the vast and fertile plain, the *Cul-de-Sac*, east of the capital, Port-au-Prince. But other portions, notably the long peninsula to the south-west, were also highly prosperous. The chief towns equalled in splendour and activity the provincial cities of France. Port-au-Prince and Cap Français were the pride of the West Indies; and the rocky fortress, Mole St. Nicholas, dominated those waters as Gibraltar dominates the Eastern Mediterranean. The population of Hayti was reckoned at 40,000 whites, 60,000 mulattoes or half-castes, and some 500,000 negro slaves. Its exports (chiefly sugar, coffee, and cotton) were assessed at upwards of £7,500,000, or more by one third than that of all the British West Indies. To some extent Jamaica flourished on its ruin. For in May 1796 an official report stated that two coffee-planters, refugees from Hayti, who had settled in the mountains behind Port Royal, were introducing so many improvements as to bring the exports of coffee up to 6,000,000 lb.; and they would soon amount to 50,000,000 lb.[2]

The colonists of Hayti, who offered this valuable prize to Great Britain, were far from being unprincipled adventurers. Malouet, on whom fell the chief responsibility, was an upright and able man; and both he and his comrades were deputed by representative Assemblies which sought to save society from sinking into a gulf of unutterable horrors. His letters to Pitt[3] are instinct with the conviction that the men of Hayti unanimously desired a British protectorate, and recognized that the colonists must pay for the support accorded to them. As we were framing an alliance with Spain, no difficulties were to be anticipated from the Spanish part of that island. When five or six valuable islands were to be had, to all appearance with little risk except from the slaves, Ministers would have been craven in the extreme not to push on an enterprise which promised to benefit British commerce and cripple that of France.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 402, 403.

[2] Pitt MSS., 349.

[3] Pitt MSS., 155, 349. In the latter packet is Malouet's letter of 10th March 1793 from Kingston, Jamaica, to M. Franklyn at London, dwelling

Unfortunately, owing to the drain of the Flemish campaign, their action was tardy. The schisms between Royalists and Republicans at the city of Cap Français enabled the negroes to burst in at midsummer of 1793 with fire and knife and glut their vengeance on some thousands of persons. Even after these atrocities the Jacobin commissioners continued to make use of the blacks in order to enforce their levelling decree; and the year ended amid long drawn out scenes of murder, rape, and pillage. By these infamous means did democracy win its triumph in the West Indies.

In their despair the French loyalists applied for further aid to Major-General Williamson, the governor of Jamaica. He sent a force which received a hearty welcome at the little fortress of Jérémie (19th September), and a few days later at that important stronghold, Mole St. Nicholas, then blockaded on land by the blacks. An attempt by the Republicans at the capital, Port-au-Prince, to send an expedition for the recapture of Mole St. Nicholas was thwarted; and late in the year 1793 five other towns accepted British protection. The rapid recovery of prosperity in the district forming the lower jaw of the griffin-like head of Hayti is seen in the official exports from the port of Grand Anse at its tip. During the quarter 20th September to 31st December 1793 it sent the following quantities to British ports, chiefly Kingston in Jamaica: Coffee, 644,751 lb.; Sugar, 91,593 lb.; Cotton, 56,339 lb.; Cocoa, 66,944 lb. Even larger quantities of coffee were exported to foreign ports.[1] In 1796 the produce of Hayti was valued at £1,500,000; the colony employed more than 400 ships.[2] Was not this a land for which some risks might be encountered?

on the woes of San Domingo and Martinique—all due to the folly and wickedness of one man, probably Brissot. He despairs of the French West Indies. See, too, "Dropmore P.," ii, 388.

[1] Pitt MSS., 349.

[2] "Parl. Hist.," xxxiii, 586.

Meanwhile the Spaniards from their part of the island had overrun certain districts, especially those to the north of Port-au-Prince. In particular, they for a time occupied the port of Gonaives, about midway between the capital and Mole St. Nicholas, a step almost as threatening to the British forces as to the French Republicans. It is hard to fathom the designs of the Spaniards at this time. Their pride, their hereditary claims to the whole of the Indies, and their nearness to this splendid prize, all urged them on to an effort from which lack of men, ships and money, and the hatred of the French and the blacks to their sway should have warned them off. Seeing also that the French colonists had officially handed over their possession to Great Britain, Spain should have come to some understanding with her Ally before invading what was now in effect British territory. She did not do so; and subsequent events proved that her King and statesmen harboured deep resentment against the transfer, and sought to thwart it by underhand means. For the present, however, their inroad into the north-central districts dealt one more blow to the power of the French Jacobins and their black friends. These last were formidable only when the quest was plunder. Even the iron will of their ablest leader, Toussaint l'Ouverture, could infuse no steadiness into the swarthy levies, which, roving almost at will in the mountainous interior, were wellnigh as dangerous to the Republicans as to the British.[1]

It is not surprising, then, that Pitt and Dundas, despite the drain of ships and men to Ostend and Toulon, did all in their power to secure this colony, which had always been deemed essential to the prosperity of French commerce. On 11th October 1793 Pitt reluctantly admitted the need of further postponing the West India expedition owing to the uncertainty of the fate of Ostend and the chance of a French raid on our shores. But when these dangers passed away the original plan held the first place; and it should be noted that, by the middle of November, when the expedition was finally decided on, the position of the Royalists at Toulon was thought to be satisfactory. Much, of course, can be urged against sending troops so far away, when the loyal Bretons needed succour; but Pitt, Grenville, and, still more, Dundas were bent on this colonial enterprise; and, viewing the situation as it then was, not as we with our knowledge of later events see it, their decision seems defensible.[1]

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[1] The facts stated above suffice to refute the strange statement of Mr. Morse Stephens ("Fr. Rev.," ii, 476) that the English invasion of San Domingo was "absurd." It was not an invasion, but an occupation of the coast towns after scarcely any resistance.

On 26th November, then, Sir John Jervis (afterwards Earl of St. Vincent) set sail with some 7,000 troops commanded by Sir Charles Grey. After touching at Barbados he made for Martinique and succeeded in reducing that island by 22nd March 1794. St. Lucia, Guadeloupe, Marie Galante, and the Saintes surrendered in April, but after struggles which showed that the Republicans, backed by mulattoes and blacks, were formidable foes. This anarchic combination was already threatening the small and scattered British garrisons in San Domingo. But, when further reinforcements from England reached Mole St. Nicholas, a force detached thence under Major-General Whyte made a dash upon Port-au-Prince. Vigorously handled, and under cover of a violent thunderstorm, the landing parties carried an important outwork in handsome style, and thus assured the surrender of the whole place. The spoils were 101 cannon and 32 ships, with cargoes worth about half a million sterling (4th June 1794). This brilliant success cost the assailants very few lives; but the heats of the summer and probably also the intemperance of the troops soon thinned their ranks. The French, too, having received succours which slipped out from Rochefort, recovered Guadeloupe in the month of September.[2] And from this point of vantage they sought, often with success, to stir up the slaves in the British islands.

Thus by the autumn of 1794 the position was somewhat as follows. The British had secured all the French colonies in the West Indies, excepting Guadeloupe. In Hayti they held nearly all the coast towns, and maintained an intermittent blockade over the others; but their position was precarious owing to the thinness of their garrisons, the untrustworthiness of their mulatto auxiliaries, and the ravages of disease. It seems probable that, with ordinary precautions and some reinforcements, the garrisons might have held out in the towns then occupied, provided that the fleet intercepted French expeditions destined for the West Indies; and this ought to have been possible after Howe's victory of 1st June 1794. The fact that the Republic strenuously prepared to regain those islands at the very time when the Coalition in Europe and the revolt in Brittany threatened its existence, suffices to justify Pitt and his colleagues in attacking France in that quarter. A colony which is worth regaining must be worth gaining. To the capture of Louisburg, a weaker stronghold than Mole St. Nicholas, England devoted several expeditions a generation earlier. Had Pitt and Dundas declined to have as a gift this key to the Indies, what would not their critics have said of their incapacity and cowardice? For the West Indies were then far more highly prized than Canada.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 443, 454, 464.

[2] Fortescue, iv, pt. i, chs. xiii, xiv; James, i, 250-2.

Endless difficulties beset every expedition to the tropics, even when forethought and care minimize the risks from disease. The story of England's ventures in those seas is, in general, one of hasty action and long repentance. No one had made a special study of the needs of white men in that climate. In fact, the military martinets of those days made little allowance for the altered conditions of service under a broiling sun; and, until the advent of Abercromby, only slight changes took place either in the uniform or the time of drills. Dr. Pinckard, in his account of this enterprise, mentions cases of gross stupidity, slovenliness, and even of dishonesty on the part of army officials in those colonies;[1] and it is clear that to this cause the long death-roll was largely due. The following figures at the close of 1794 are instructive:[2]

	British.		Colonial.	
	Effective.	Sick.	Effective.	Sick.
Port-au-Prince	366	462	496	48
Mole St. Nicholas	209	166	209	38
Jérémie	95	59	—	—
St. Marc	48	33	813	321
Tiburon	34	18	—	—
Total	1490		1925	

It will be observed that the French and coloured troops were far more immune from sickness. Indeed, the loyal French colonists felt much annoyance at the comparative uselessness of the British force at this time. Charmilly, after a long visit to Hayti, returned to London in September 1794, and laid stress on this in several letters to Pitt. On 11th October he urges him to sanction a plan (already approved) for raising a force of French *émigrés* for service in Hayti. A month later he complains that nothing is being done, though the loyalists of Hayti are willing to pay their share of the expenses. As it is, they are growing disheartened; for the British troops remain in the strongholds, thus leaving the colonial troops in the country too weak to cope with the roving bands of brigands. As for himself he is weary of soliciting help which is never vouchsafed; and he warns Pitt that opinion is gaining ground in Hayti as to the uselessness of maintaining a struggle in which the British people take no interest. The note of egotism rarely absent from Charmilly's letters appears in his assurance that, if something is not done soon, England will lose the splendid possession which he has placed in her hand.[1]

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[1] Pinckard, "Notes on the Expedition to the West Indies," ii, especially Letter 15.

[2] Bryan Edwards, "Hist. Survey of S. Domingo" (1801), 204. Fortescue (iv, 385) assesses the British losses in the West Indies in 1794 at 12,000 men, apart from deaths in battle.

There were good reasons why Pitt and his colleagues should not commit themselves deeply to the Haytian embroglio. In that anxious time, the autumn of 1794, the most urgent needs were to save Holland from the Jacobins, to distract them by helping the Royalists of Brittany, and from our new base in Corsica to clog their attempts at an invasion of Italy. Owing to the slackness of our Allies, these enterprises proved unexpectedly difficult. In truth any two of them would have strained the scanty resources of the British army; and Pitt is open to censure for not ruling out all but the most essential of them. But here a word of caution is needful. For us, with our knowledge of the sequel, it is a comparatively easy task to assess the gains and losses of the war, and to blame perseverance in one course as wasteful folly or backwardness in another as stupid slothfulness. If later critics would seek to realize the amount of information possessed by fallible mortals at the time of their decisions, the world would be spared floods of censure. How was Pitt to know that the Dutch were about to hamper, rather than assist, the defence of their land by the Allies; that Prussia would play him false; that the schisms among the French Royalists would make Quiberon a word of horror; that Paoli would stir up strife in Corsica; or that Spain was preparing to ruin British rule in Hayti? With loyal co-operation on the part of the Allies, all these enterprises might have proceeded successfully side by side.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 121.

There were no solid reasons for distrusting Spain. The Court of Madrid had eagerly taken up arms against the regicides of Paris; and Pitt, as we shall see, early sought to avoid friction in the West Indies. Otherwise, he would be highly blameable; for England's easy acquisition of Hayti could not but ruffle the feelings of the Dons. No chord in the highly strung nature of the Spaniard vibrates so readily and so powerfully as that of pride in the retention or recovery of the conquests of his ancestors. The determination of the Court of Madrid to win back Louisiana and the Floridas, not to speak of Minorca, had potently influenced its policy in the recent past, and the prospect of seeing the Union Jack wave over Hayti and Corsica now envenomed the ever open wound of Gibraltar. True, the French colonists of Hayti, acting through their local Assemblies, had the right to will away their land to England. Spain, at least, could not say them nay; but none the less she longed to see her flag float once more over the western districts which had slipped from her grasp.

Pitt and Grenville had early foreseen trouble ahead with Spain on the subject of the West Indies. When affairs at Toulon were causing friction, Grenville instructed Lord St. Helens, British ambassador at Madrid, to urge that Court to secure the hoped-for indemnities in the French districts north of the Pyrenees. As for England, she had in view Hayti and certain of the French Leeward Islands. This plan, continued Grenville, could not offend Spain, seeing that the Haytian or western part of San Domingo fronted Jamaica and fell naturally to the Power holding that island. But, as the Court of Madrid was known to cherish desires for a part of Hayti, St. Helens must endeavour to ascertain their extent so as to come to a friendly compromise.[1] The Spanish Government, at that time incensed by the quarrels at Toulon, vouchsafed no reply to these courteous overtures. They were renewed during the year 1794, but with no better result.

Meanwhile, Don Garcia, the Spanish Governor of San

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 28. Grenville to St. Helens, 30th November 1793. On 1st October Pitt pressed Grenville to open this question to the Spanish Court ("Dropmore P.," ii, 433, 438).

Domingo sought to pour oil on the flames of civil strife. He allowed the bands of negroes to retire into the Spanish districts, and replenish their stores. In tact, his conduct was so openly hostile to England, that on 11th November 1794 Grenville instructed Jackson, British *chargé d'affaires* at Madrid, to demand the recall of that arrogant official.[1] Charmilly also averred that the brigands often sallied forth from Spanish territory to ravage the western districts.[2] Other facts point in the same direction. Whence could the Republicans and their black allies have gained supplies of arms and ammunition but from the Spaniards? The survey of the British over the western coasts was close enough to bar those supplies, at least in the quantities that the negroes demanded. In truth, the enigmas of the Hayti affair can be solved only by delving in the Spanish archives. The whole question is closely connected with the extraordinary change that came over Anglo-Spanish relations in the years 1795-6, a topic which will be treated in the following chapter.

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[1] "H. O." (Secretaries of State), 5.

[2] Pitt MSS., 349. He added that in 1788, 584 European and 699 American ships set sail from Hayti: 37,447 negroes were imported.

CHAPTER X

SPAIN AND HAYTI

Are not Martinique, Mole St. Nicholas, and the Cape of Good Hope most important conquests?—PITT, *Speech of 9th December* 1795.

MORE than once it has happened that, after a time of national revival, Spain has fallen under the dominion of a ruler led by wrongheaded counsellors and intriguing favourites. Such was the case in the year 1788. Charles III, who then passed away, had restored the finances, the prosperity, the navy, and the prestige of that land. But his successor, Charles IV, proved to be one of the weakest and most indolent members of that dynasty. Fond of display, and devoted to the pleasures of the chase and the table, he squandered the resources of the State, and soon saw his finances fall into hopeless confusion. Worse still, his consort, a princess of the ducal House of Parma, and a woman of much energy, conceived a violent passion for Manuel Godoy, a young private in the royal guards, on whom she heaped favours and dignities, so that he forced his way into the highest circles with the title Duke of Alcudia. He was endowed with a dignified mien, handsome features, affable manners, and good abilities, so that the British ambassador, Lord St. Helens, happily characterized him as a Birmingham Villiers. The measure of his importance and of the degradation of the Sovereigns may be gauged from the fact that the paramour of the Queen became the chief Minister of the King. In truth, the Queen, her lover, and her two confessors governed Spain.

The habits of the favourite were as follows. He rose early, drove or rode for an hour, and after breakfast transacted business for a time. He then relieved the tedium of that time by witnessing exhibitions of skill and daring by his private matadors, after which he spent about three hours in the society of the Queen. He then devoted the same length of time to the conduct of public business with the King; and the day ended with dinner, fêtes, the opera, or the consideration of requests for patronage. This function of State generally occupied three evenings in the week; and on these occasions a crowd of some 250 suitors filled his meanly lit ante-room with jealous expectancy and long baffled hopes.[1]

Certainly the representatives of monarchy at this time of acute trial were unequal to the strain. Catharine of Russia was supremely able, but no less corrupt. Frederick William of Prussia equalled her in vice and in nothing else. Francis of Austria had the brain of a master of ceremonies; George III that of a model squire; Ferdinand of Naples was in his place in the kennel; Victor Amadeus of Sardinia, in the confessional. It is difficult to say to what place Charles IV of Spain and his consort can most fitly be assigned; for they could not live apart from Godoy; and with Godoy they would have been excluded from any residence but the royal palace of Spain. The policy of that Court wavered under his whims and devices. Hated by the grandees, loathed by honest people, and yet fawned on by all alike, he sought to strengthen his power by jobbery, with results fatal to the public services. Such a man evades difficulties instead of grappling with them. He lives for the day. "After me the deluge" is the motto of all Godoys.

The favourite soon perceived that the war with France pleased neither the Court, the merchants, nor the people. Charles IV had gone to war for the restoration of royalty; but, thanks to the perfidy of Prussia and the vacillations of Austria, that ideal had vanished; and in its place there appeared the spectres of want and bankruptcy. By the end of 1794 the Republicans had gained a firm foothold in Catalonia and Biscay; and the prospect of further campaigns was highly distasteful to a Court which kept up the traditional pomp of the Spanish monarchy. Even when the Spanish forces in Catalonia and Biscay were wellnigh starving, the Court borrowed £160,000 to defray the expenses of the usual migration to San Ildefonso; and the British ambassador computed that the cost of a campaign could be saved by a sojourn in Madrid for the whole year. But parsimony such as this was out of the question. Accordingly the only possible alternatives were, peace with France, an issue of paper money, or a bankruptcy. Godoy inclined strongly to peace, and discovered in Anglophobia a means of betraying the French House of Bourbon. England, so he averred, had entered on the war solely for her own aggrandisement, with the view of appropriating first Dunkirk, then Toulon, and, failing them, Corsica and Hayti, to the manifest detriment of Spain. The argument was specious; for Pitt's resolve to cripple France by colonial conquests necessarily tended to re-awaken the old jealousies of the Spaniards; and herein, as in other respects, the son had to confront difficulties unknown in the days of his father. The task of the elder Pitt was simple compared with that of humouring and spurring on five inert and yet jealous Allies.

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 36. Bute to Grenville, 26th June 1795.

Among them Spain was not the least slothful and exacting. After the quarrels between Langara and Hood at Toulon, the despatches from Madrid to London were full of complaints. Now it was the detention of Danish vessels carrying naval stores, ostensibly for Cadiz, but in reality, as we asserted, for Rochefort. Now it was the seizure and condemnation of a Spanish merchantman, the "Sant' Iago," on a somewhat similar charge. England had equal cause for annoyance. The embers of the quarrel of 1790 were once more fanned to a flame by Spanish officials. Captain Vancouver, of H.M.S. "Discovery," while on a voyage to survey the island which now bears his name, had his ship and crew detained and ill-treated at Monterey Bay by the Governor of California. The Court of St. James warmly protested against this conduct as contrary to the Nootka Sound Convention of 1790; and thereby inflamed that still open wound. Valdez, Minister of Marine, the only rival of Godoy, now openly avowed his hostility to England. Early in February 1795, in a conference with the King, he hotly denounced British designs in Corsica and Hayti. Thenceforth there was no hope of securing the co-operation of the Spanish fleet for the blockade of Toulon and other duties too exacting for Admiral Hotham's squadron. On 11th February Godoy handed to Jackson, our *chargé d'affaires*, a state paper containing the assurance that Spain desired to continue the struggle against France; but "if His Christian Majesty finds another road less dangerous than that which he follows, he will take it with the dignity becoming his rank; he will exhaust the means he may have till he shall obtain the welfare of his people; but he will not look on their annihilation with indifference, if those who have a similar interest vary the mode of pursuing it." In plain language this meant that, as Prussia was then treating with France, Spain would follow her example when she thought fit.[1]

Thereafter the Spanish Ministers either manifested sullen reserve or indulged in petulant complaints respecting the "Sant' Iago," Corsica, and Hayti. The conduct of the Marquis del Campo at London was equally sinister; his despatches represented the policy and conduct of England in the darkest colours. In the hope of softening these asperities Pitt and Grenville decided to send the Earl of Bute to Madrid in place of Jackson, who desired to escape from the insolences of that capital. Thus by one of the subtle ironies of history, the son of Chatham despatched to the Court of Madrid the son of the man who thwarted Chatham's aims respecting that same Power. Bute's instructions (dated 5th April) bade him humour that Court, but none the less look out for any signs of a Franco-Spanish compact, and discover at what place in the Spanish colonies a blow might be dealt with most effect.

On 13th April, after receiving news of a Spanish success in Catalonia, Grenville urged Bute to re-awaken Castilian pride by holding out the prospect of gains beyond the Pyrenees, and expressed the hope that Spain might renew her treaty with England, promising also to consider her claims to parts of the north-west of Hayti. These hopes were futile. Early in that year France and Spain began to draw close together. The more moderate Republicans, Sieyès, Boissy d'Anglas, and Cambacérès, let it be known that France would offer moderate terms. Barthélemy, the able French envoy in Switzerland, furthered these plans, which came near to fulfilment when Prussia signed with France the Treaty of Basle (5th April 1795). Charles IV was only waiting for some excuse to follow suit. As a relative of Louis XVI, he scrupled to take the lead; but he was ready to follow the lead of Prussia. The sacrifices demanded of him in March 1795 were considerable, viz., the province of Guipuzcoa and San Domingo. But Bourgoing, the special envoy to Madrid, offered a prize which far counterbalanced these losses. He held out to Godoy the bait which in the more skilful hands of Napoleon was destined to catch both him and his credulous master. Portugal was to be theirs if they made common cause with France. Acting together, the two Latin nations would overwhelm this "province of England," and together they would chase the British from the Mediterranean. That Portugal had loyally supported Spain in the monarchist cause mattered little. In place of the costly war of principle, Godoy sought to substitute an effort with limited liability, effective partnership, and enormous profits. He knew not that in entering on this broad and easy path, he assured the ruin of Spain and the ultimate loss of her colonial empire.

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 36. Jackson to Grenville, 2nd January and 11th February 1795.

In this secret chaffering Pitt and Grenville were worsted as inevitably as in the similar case of the Partition of Poland. The Power that cries "hands off" to abettors of robbery needs to have overwhelming force at its back; but both here and on the banks of the Vistula England was helpless. There was no Court of Appeal. Christendom had vanished amidst the schemes of the monarchs in the East, and under the stabs of regicides in the West. Thus, while the champions of monarchy were sharing the last spoils of Poland, France succeeded in detaching Spain from the royalist league by inciting her to the plunder of Portugal.

Few moves have been more mean and cowardly; though the conduct of the Court of Madrid in this matter touches far deeper depths of infamy. For its present position was far from hopeless. With the help of the British fleet the progress of the French troops towards Bilbao might have been stayed. Affairs in Catalonia wore a hopeful aspect. England offered to recognize the Spanish conquests in Hayti and to press for further indemnities from France at the general peace. But all representations were in vain. Godoy brushed them aside in order to compass the ruin of the House of Braganza. On this enterprise he concentrated all his faculties. He inveighed against the invasion of Hayti by British troops. "His Britannic Majesty," he said, "ought to have abstained from any interference with the island of San Domingo, upon the whole of which His Christian Majesty had a well-founded claim; or, if any enterprize was undertaken there by Great Britain, it should have been in the way of auxiliary to Spain in order to restore to her her ancient possessions in the West Indies." On other occasions he moaned over the heavy expenses of the war, the misery of the people, and the impossibility of resisting the superior power of France. But his chief theme was Hayti, and he finally suggested that the British acquisitions in that island should be held in trust for Louis XVII. He was not a little ruffled by the reply that they belonged of right to George III, who would keep them as compensation for the expenses of the war. Another significant fact was the removal of a fine corps of French *émigrés*, some 3,300 strong, from the northern provinces to Cadiz, on their way to the West Indies.

At the time of the arrival of Bute at that port (25th May), Fortune vouchsafed a few gleams of hope to the Allies. Spanish pride having kicked against the French demands, especially that of the province of Guipuzcoa, Bourgoing's mission proved fruitless. The diplomatic situation also improved. In February 1795, as we have seen, Catharine II of Russia signed a defensive treaty with Great Britain, to which Austria acceeded on 20th May. Thus did Pitt replace the outworn Triple Alliance with Prussia and Holland by a more powerful confederacy. With these bright prospects in view, and animated by the hope of rousing Western France from Quiberon, Pitt had a right to expect some measure of fortitude even in the Court of Madrid.[1] But Godoy remained obdurate. On 11th June, in his first interview with Bute, he said he had no faith in Russia; the vacillations of Austria were notorious; and Pitt was said to be about to send Eden to Paris to sue for peace. As for Spain, she was hard pressed; French and American emissaries had stirred up strife in her colonies; and affairs were most "ticklish" in San Domingo. His Government had therefore sought for a composition (not a definite peace) with France. In fact, the war as a whole had failed, for whereas the Allies had set themselves to crush French principles, they had succeeded merely in uniting the French people in one common cause. On 11th July he promised to recall the Anglophobe Governor of San Domingo; but he declared the island to be in so distracted a state that both Spaniards and British would probably be expelled. He then complained that somehow England always got the better of Spain; witness Nootka Sound, Hayti, and Corsica. In spite of Bute's assurance that he came to end these jealousies, Godoy continued to drift on the tide of events. "No plan is prepared," wrote Bute on 11th July, "no measures are taken. The accident of the day seems to determine everything, and happy do the

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 37. Grenville to Bute, 5th, 12th, and 19th June.

Ministers feel when the day is passed." He therefore advised that Godoy should be bribed.

The advice came too late. Already the favourite had instructed Don Domingo d'Yriarte, his envoy to the now extinct Polish Republic, to confer with Barthélemy, the French Ambassador at Basle. The actions of Yriarte, of course, depended on the secret behests of Godoy. On 2nd July Godoy informed him that peace was the only means of thwarting the efforts of the bad counsellors of the Crown; and four days later he wrote:

> Every day makes peace more necessary. There is no hope of restoring affairs in Navarre. Cowardice has unnerved our army and the French will dictate their terms to us. . . . I fear that their claims will be excessive, and condescension is our only resource if we are to succeed in saving ourselves even in part. Your Lordship need not take alarm at the rigour of the terms of peace; listen to them, accept them, and forward them to me, saying to yourself that perhaps they will not be so fatal as the results of a delay in the negotiation might be.[1]

Yriarte, a nervous valetudinarian, eagerly accepted this despicable advice. Already one of his secretaries had allowed Barthélemy to see an almost equally base effusion from Godoy; so that the French ambassador on 21st July informed the Committee of Public Safety that the game was in their hands. This was the case. Yriarte, after receiving two packets from Madrid, hastily sought a nocturnal interview with Barthélemy by the help of a dark lantern. The French ambassador received him with some surprise, especially on hearing that he came to sign a treaty of peace on terms not yet known at Paris. When the Spaniard insisted on signing at once, Barthélemy examined the conditions, and finding them highly favourable to France, consulted his secretaries, with the result that he finally decided to conclude the affair.

Thus came about the Peace of Basle (22nd July 1795). Spain now waived her former demands, the restoration of religious worship in France, and French aid in the recovery of Gibraltar. The French, however, now agreed to restore all the districts held by their troops in the North of Spain, while the Court of Madrid ceded San Domingo. Spain also made peace with the Dutch or Batavian Republic, and offered to mediate between France and Portugal, Naples, Sardinia, and Parma.[2] Such were the chief clauses of this astonishing compact. It dealt a deadly blow to Pitt. For at the very time when he was building up a formidable league and rousing Brittany against the Republic, Spain seceded from the monarchist cause, and by surrendering San Domingo to France, doomed to failure his costly efforts in Hayti. Further, as will appear in Chapter XI, by setting free large numbers of the French troops at the Pyrenees, she greatly enhanced the difficulties of the expedition of General Doyle to the coast of la Vendée. Worst of all, it soon appeared that Godoy was bent on reviving the policy of the Family Compact, making common cause even with the murderers of Louis XVI in order to thwart England's expansion oversea. Bute therefore warned our Government to prepare to strike a blow at once, before the Spanish fleet should be ready to help the French either in Corsica or Hayti. These precautions proved, for the present at least, to be unnecessary. The degradation of the Court and populace of Madrid may be measured by the joy with which the news of that inglorious peace was received. The Queen, fearful that the failures in the war would lead to the fall of her paramour, procured the speedy ratification of the Treaty of Basle and decorated him with the title Prince of the Peace.

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[1] Del Cantillo, "Tratados," 660.

[2] "Papiers de Barthélemy," vi, Introd., xv, 71, 77-85.

On hearing of the defection of Spain, Pitt at once took steps to guard Hayti against a treacherous attack by detaching the greater part of the British force then preparing to help the French Royalists of la Vendée. The general opinion both in London and Madrid was that war must ensue. Godoy kept a close watch upon Bute, who took a mansion in Madrid on a long lease in order to lull that Court into security. It was of the highest importance to avert or delay a rupture with Spain; for the condition of the British West Indies was most critical. The French, having recovered Guadeloupe and St. Lucia, despatched thence emissaries to fire the slaves in the British islands with the hope of gaining liberty and equality. The peril became acute in Jamaica. There about 500 negroes had escaped to the mountains, especially in Trelawny and Charlestown Counties, and by night carried out murderous raids against the planters and their dependents. So fiendish were the atrocities of these Maroons, that the authorities in that island applied to the Spaniards in Cuba for one hundred bloodhounds and twenty huntsmen in order to track the Maroons to their fastnesses. This device proved successful; the murderers were by degrees hunted down, and were transported to British North America, £25,000 being voted by the Jamaica Assembly for settling them there.

Nevertheless the use of bloodhounds, which placed Britons on a level with the Spanish crusaders, aroused general disgust. Attempts were made in the House of Commons by General Macleod, Sheridan, and Courtenay to represent the Maroons as men worthily struggling for liberty. Dundas, while pruning these sprays of rhetoric, declared that Ministers would thereafter prohibit the use of bloodhounds. These troubles with the slaves prejudiced Parliament against any change in their condition. In vain did Francis, in one of the last speeches of an acrid but not discreditable career, press for the amelioration of their lot. At the outset he showed the bitterness of his enmity to Pitt by charging him with the betrayal of the cause which, in his oration of 2nd April 1792, he had irradiated with the beatific vision of a regenerated and blissful Africa. Why, he asked, did not the Minister resign office after his failure to realize his heart's desire? He then charged him with insincerity on the whole question, and urged the House to be content with alleviating the condition of the slaves by giving them the rudiments of education and some rights of property, above all by securing the sanctity of their marriages. Fox followed with a speech aimed more against Pitt than the slave-owners. The Prime Minister then replied. Ignoring the charges of his opponents, he pointed out that the proposed improvements were utterly inadequate to remedy the ills of the negroes so long as Parliament allowed shiploads of these unhappy creatures to be cast into the West Indies every year. What was needed, he said, was the abolition of that hateful traffic, indeed of the whole system of slavery. For himself, he still hoped that Parliament would adopt those measures, which alone could be effective. Wilberforce was absent through illness. Francis, having elicited in the main mere personalities, not declarations of principle, withdrew his motion.

The lapse of the question of Abolition in the years 1795-6 was a public misfortune; for the slaves, despairing of justice from England, turned to France. For the good of the cause they murdered men, women, or children, with equal indifference; and, when hunted down, died with the cry *Vive la République*. Here was our chief difficulty in the West Indies. Owing to the refusal of Parliament to limit the supply of slaves or to alleviate their condition, we had to deal with myriads of blacks, exasperated by their former hardships, hoping everything from France, and able to support climatic changes which dealt havoc to the raw English levies. In truth, the success of the West India expeditions depended on other factors besides military and medical skill. It turned on political and humanitarian motives that were scouted at Westminster. The French Jacobins stole many a march on the English governing classes; and in declaring the negro to be an equal of the white man they nearly wrecked Britain's possessions in the West Indies.

For a great negro leader had now appeared. Toussaint l'Ouverture, though probably not of pure negro blood, was born at Breda in the north of Hayti in 1746. His mental gifts were formidable; and when sharpened by education and by long contact with whites, they enabled him to play upon the elemental passions of his kindred, to organize them, to lead them to the fight, to cure their wounds, and to overawe their discontent. A barbarian in his outbursts of passion, and a European in organizing power, he became a zealot in the Republican cause. A quarrel with another masterful negro, Jean François, forced him for a time to retire into the Spanish part of San Domingo; but he soon returned, and proved to be our most formidable enemy.

The position in Hayti at the close of 1795 was somewhat as follows. The Republicans and their coloured allies, often helped by the Spaniards, held or ravaged the greater part of the territory which the French Royalists had invited us to possess. Their hopeful forecasts had led Pitt and Dundas to send far too few troops for what proved to be an increasingly difficult enterprise; and at this time British authority extended scarcely beyond the reach of the garrisons. The French Royalists had not given the help which Malouet and Charmilly had led our Ministers to expect.[1] And on the other hand, Victor Hugues, the Republican leader, managed to spread revolt in St. Vincent, Grenada, and Dominica. In this critical state of things, the Cabinet decided to accord to Major-General Williamson, Governor of Hayti, a long furlough, and to place in supreme command a man of great resourcefulness and power of character.

Sir Ralph Abercromby was at this time sixty-one years of age; but in zeal and ardour he excelled nearly all the junior officers. His toughness and energy had invested with dignity even the disastrous retreat from Holland early in the year. He was not a great commander; for he lacked both soundness and firmness of judgement, and he had no grasp of the principles of strategy; but he restored the discipline and prestige of the British army; and in him Moore and Wellesley hailed the dawn of a brighter era. "The best man and the best soldier who has appeared amongst us this war," was Moore's comment after Abercromby's glorious death near Alexandria.[1] Pitt has often been charged with lack of judgement in selecting commanders. Let it be remembered, then, that he sent Abercromby to the post of difficulty and danger.

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[1] "W. O.," vi, 6, which contains other despatches of Dundas cited later.

Unfortunately, delays multiplied at Spithead. Though the Cabinet withdrew the marrow of the Vendean expedition, yet not enough troops were available to complete Abercromby's muster; and when the men were ready, the ordnance and transports were not at hand. What Department and what officials were answerable for this scandalous state of things it is hard to say. Buckingham, who had several correspondents at Portsmouth, suspected Abercromby of shiftlessness. However that may be, the autumn wore away amidst recriminations and growing discontent. When the fleet at last put to sea, it encountered a terrible storm off Portland; several transports were dashed to pieces on that point; while others in the van were flung back on to the Chesil Beach or the shore near Bridport (18th November). The horrors of the scene were heightened by the brutality of the coast population, which rushed on the spoil in utter disregard of the wretches struggling in the waves. The rest of the convoy put back to Spithead; and not till the spring of 1796 did Abercromby reach Jamaica. Dundas had instructed him first to recover St. Lucia and Guadeloupe, whence Victor Hugues had flung forth the brands of revolt. Ultimately the flames shrivelled up the colonies of France; but, for the present, they were more formidable than her fleets and armies. It was therefore sound policy to strike at those two islands. In a "secret" despatch of 4th November, Dundas also warned Major-General Forbes closely to watch the Spaniards in San Domingo, and, though not attacking their posts, yet to support the French Royalists with arms and money in case they desired to do so.

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[1] "Diary of Sir John Moore," i, 208, 221, 233, 243; ii, 18, 19.

Among those who sailed from Portsmouth early in 1796 was Colonel (afterwards Sir John) Moore.[1] He found the West India service most unpopular. Yet the energy of Abercromby and Moore brought about the surrender of that almost impregnable fortress, Morne Fortunée, in St. Lucia. Moore was left as governor of the island, but with a garrison insufficient to complete the subjection of the fanatical blacks. General Whyte found the conquest of the Dutch settlement of Demerara a far easier task than its retention. Abercromby then relieved St. Vincent and strengthened the defences of Grenada, that island having been recaptured by General Nicols. Abercromby and his comrades thus saved those possessions from the most imminent danger. His services were almost as great in the quarters as on the field. He adapted the cumbrous uniform to the needs of the tropics, and, by abolishing parades and drills in the noontide heats, and improving the sanitary conditions of the camps, sought to stay the ravages of disease, of which the carelessness or stupidity of officials had been the most potent ally. On 21st April 1796 Sheridan moved for a return of the troops who had succumbed to disease in the West Indies. He asserted that several of them, on landing, were without shoes and stockings, that hospitals crowded with sick were without medicines or bandages, and that in one case a hundred patients had to spend the night on the bare beach. Dundas's reply was virtually an admission of the truth of these charges.

The declaration of war by Spain in the autumn of 1796 brought about a new situation. The Republicans and their black allies regularly took refuge and found their supplies in the central parts of San Domingo now ceded to France; but when the British sought to follow and attack them there, they were assured that it was neutral territory. The British Government warmly protested against this duplicity. Either the island was Spanish, or it was French. If the former, then Toussaint and his men had no right to retreat thither. If the latter, the British could attack them. In point of fact, plans for the transfer of San Domingo to France were at that time dragging slowly along at Madrid: and when the French General, Rom, failed to bend that Court to his terms, he departed for the island under the convoy of a Spanish squadron. This incident was typical of the recent policy of

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[1] "Diary of Sir John Moore," 2 vols. Edited by General Maurice.

Madrid. In every possible way it favoured France. Early in 1796 seven French warships underwent extensive repairs in the royal dockyard at Cadiz. Merry, secretary of legation at Madrid, further reported numerous seizures of British merchantmen by French privateers which brought them into Spanish harbours. Twelve ships were thus brought into Alicante in the winter of 1795-6; and English merchants could get no redress for these seizures. French privateers also fitted out at Trinidad to act against Grenada and Tobago.[1]

Provocations were not all on one side. Early in 1796, three Spanish West Indiamen were overhauled by two English frigates and taken to Bermuda, in the belief that war had broken out. They were, however, at once released. Godoy protested angrily against this indignity, and early in March hinted that Spain's neutrality would cease on the establishment of a French Government. Two months later Bute found that Spain was seeking to form a Quadruple Alliance, namely, with France, Denmark, and Sweden, a scheme which Ehrenthal, the Swedish envoy, warmly furthered. The news of Bonaparte's victories in Italy and of the financial troubles in England evidently puffed up Godoy with the hope of playing the part of an Alberoni for the humiliation of England; and in 1796 Spain had better prospects of worsting the islanders than in 1718 when they had the alliance of France, Austria, and Holland. In truth, no period was more favourable for a revival of the Latin races than the years 1796-7, when England was in dire straits, when Austria succumbed under the blows of Bonaparte, and the Dutch, Danes, and Swedes opposed the British Power. With singleness of purpose and honesty in their administrations, France, Spain, and their Allies should have wrecked the life-work of the two Pitts.

The British Ministers felt the gravity of the situation. In view of the collapse of the Austrian Power in Lombardy, Pitt wrote to Grenville on 28th June in unusually despondent terms, that it was hopeless to expect Austria to prolong the war after the present campaign. We should be left alone to confront France and Holland, "probably joined by Spain, and perhaps favoured more or less openly by the Northern Powers."[2] Accordingly we must see to our home defences, and also consider the possibility of a general peace. Grenville therefore urged Bute to seek by all methods compatible with his dignity "to preserve the good understanding of the two countries." In fact, Pitt and his colleagues now decided to bring about a general pacification; and, as will appear later, they held to that resolve, in spite of the strong opposition of George III. But, on 5th August, while they were discussing details, Bonaparte won a crushing victory over Wurmser at Castiglione, and, eleven days later, Godoy definitely sided with France. Pitt feared that the hostile league would include Denmark and Sweden; and, but for his foresight in gaining over Catharine, this would have been the issue of events. Even so, Godoy hoped to form a Quadruple Alliance with France, Holland, and Prussia. He therefore took a high tone with Bute, declaring that England would not be allowed to attack San Domingo, as it was still Spanish, and there was a necessary connection between France and Spain; but he would not hear of Bute accepting that statement as a declaration of war.

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 39, 40. Merry to Grenville, 20th and 25th December and 19th January, 10th February, 6th and 29th March.

[2] "Dropmore P.," iii, 214.

Clearly, Spain was trying to gain time; for reports from Cadiz showed her fleet to be far from ready, several of the ships being leaky. The repairs to the French ships at that dockyard also went on in the most leisurely manner. But on 4th August all was ready. Admiral Mann with a small blockading force having been called by Jervis into the Mediterranean, the French ships set sail, escorted by twenty Spanish sail-of-the-line. The French squadron made for the Bank of Newfoundland and inflicted great damage. Why it did not proceed along with the Spaniards to the West Indies is hard to say. The impact of twenty-seven sail-of-the-line in that quarter would have been decisive; but probably Godoy did not yet feel warranted in throwing down the gauntlet. Pitt and Grenville decided to overlook the gross breach of neutrality at Cadiz, and even now hoped for a change in Godoy's mood. On 26th August Grenville informed Bute that, though England had good cause for declaring war, she would await the result of the recent proposals to Spain. On or about that date Las Casas, the Spanish ambassador, pettishly left London on a flimsy pretext; and two days later Dundas warned the commander-in-chief in Hayti of the imminence of war. Nevertheless, while taking every precaution, he was not to attack the Spaniards until definite news of a rupture arrived.

Further, on the 31st (as will appear in the following chapter) Portland despatched orders to Sir Gilbert Elliot, Viceroy of Corsica, to prepare for the immediate evacuation of that island.

It is therefore clear that Pitt and his colleagues used all possible means to avert war with Spain. Bute, acting on orders from London, carried complaisance to lengths derogatory, as he thought, to the honour of Great Britain, and Godoy humoured him to the top of his bent. Thus, on 10th September, in the course of a singular interview, Godoy assured him that, even if war broke forth, it would be brief. If (he continued) England had not annoyed Spain by her naval and colonial policy, the latter might have arranged to find some indemnity, either at the expense of Holland, or else "something on the coast of California. You English have a passion for California, and the trade is in the most flourishing state." Half amused by these dilatory tactics, Bute sought to find out the real state of the case; and he discovered that the Franco-Spanish compact aimed at the joint conquest of Portugal as well as of Naples, Sicily, and Gibraltar, while England was to be compelled to surrender Honduras and Hayti. On the 5th of October he received from Godoy the Spanish declaration of war. It laid stress on the disputes at Toulon, England's seizure of Corsica, Hayti, and Dutch Demerara, besides the founding of British mercantile posts on the River Missouri, which evidently aimed at securing the routes to the Pacific.[1] Of these schemes, the conquest of Portugal lay the nearest to the heart of Godoy.

The rupture with Spain is an event of prime importance. Because her fleet was disastrously beaten by Jervis off Cape St. Vincent in February 1797, it has too often been assumed that she counted for little in the war. An examination of the British Records reveals the error of that assumption. The evacuation of Corsica and of the Mediterranean by the British forces resulted solely from the Spanish offensive. Though weak in herself, Spain held so strong a position in Europe and the West Indies as to endanger British enterprises at many points, besides threatening the coasts of Ireland. In truth, but for Spanish support in the Mediterranean, Bonaparte could never have ventured upon his Eastern expedition. Thus the defection of the Court of Madrid changed the character of the war. Thenceforth it revolved more and more around colonial questions, to the weakening of the royalist and republican motives which had worked so potently in its early stages. The oriental adventure of the young Corsican was to emphasize the contrast between the years 1793 and 1798; but the scene-shifting began with the intrigues of Godoy. In a sense Pitt himself helped on the transformation. He did not regard the struggle against France as one of political principle. He aimed solely at curbing the aggression of the Jacobins upon Holland; and the obvious device of weakening France by expeditions to the West Indies further helped to bring events back into the arena of eighteenth-century strife. Now that Spain, the protagonist of the French Bourbons, deserted their cause and attacked the Power in which they most trusted, all pretence of a war of principle vanished. The importance of the change was not perceived at the time, though signs of it were not wanting. Both in France and England democratic enthusiasm speedily died down, and the discontent, which now and again flared forth in both lands, was but a feeble sputter compared with the devouring flame of 1789.

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[1] "F. O.," Spain, 44. Bute to Grenville, 10th September and 21st October

In the West Indies the effects of the rupture with Spain were speedily felt. On 9th September 1796 Dundas instructed Forbes, commander-in-chief in Hayti, to help the Spanish settlers if they resisted the transfer of their part of the island to France. He also enjoined the utmost possible economy in public expenditure, and urged that the French settlers should have a large share in the conduct of local affairs. This zeal on behalf of local self-government was markedly opportunist. It arose from a suggestion of Colonel Wigglesworth, Commissary-General in Hayti, that the expenses of that colony would not lessen until there was a regular Government. In the midst of the financial strain at home Pitt and his colleagues desired that the French settlers should bear their share of the expense of maintaining bands of native auxiliaries. By one of the unaccountable impulses that sway the negro mind, a considerable force was now available; but it could not be utilized owing to the rigid economy enjoined by the Home Government. As the financial outlook darkened, Portland and Dundas sent urgent warnings to the new Governor of Hayti, Major-General Simcoe, bidding him concentrate the whole of the British force at Cape Nicholas Mole, the probable objective of the French and Spaniards. The military administration must be withdrawn to that fortress, the British cavalry being sent home. Further, as Great Britain could in no case bear a larger financial burden than £300,000 a year for Hayti, expenses were to be reduced on all sides, the residue falling to the share of the colonists. A larger naval force would, however, be sent; and Simcoe was advised to seize the island of Tortuga and to alarm the Spaniards by feints against Havannah.

This was the beginning of the end at Hayti. Ministers, in despair of pacifying that racial cauldron, now looked on the Spanish colonies as an easier prize. Dundas therefore ordered Abercromby to capture Porto Rico or Trinidad; and he even dallied with a fantastic scheme for shipping the Haytian colonists to Porto Rico. Abercromby, however, who again set sail from Portsmouth in November 1796, decided to make for Trinidad, and by a brilliant stroke captured its capital, Port of Spain. The attack on San Juan, in Porto Rico, met with unexpected difficulties, and ended in failure (February and April 1797). Matters now became desperate in Hayti. The rebels captured several posts near Port-au-Prince, largely owing to dissensions among the defenders. Simcoe, despite a serious illness on his way out, worked miracles with his skeleton regiments, but both he and his subordinates failed to cut down expenses as the Cabinet demanded. Accordingly, on 9th June 1797, Portland and Dundas reminded him that no further reinforcements could be sent out, and added this ominous sentence: "It is but too obvious that . . . the immense sacrifices this country has made for the protection of the French part of San Domingo have too frequently been diverted from purposes of public utility to answer the worst ends of private peculation and inordinate cupidity."

In a recent debate in the House of Commons St. John assessed the expenses of Hayti for January 1797 at £700,000; and stated that, for the discharge of judicial duties, a Frenchman was receiving £2,500 a year, which he was now squandering in London. Pitt remained silent. Dundas did not deny these allegations, but begged members to recollect the great difficulties of our officials in Hayti.[1] This was undeniable. It is the curse of a policy of retirement that waverers haste to leave betimes with all the spoils obtainable. The signs of abandonment of Hayti caused a stampede, demoralizing to all concerned. On 1st January 1798, Portland and Dundas penned the order for the evacuation of Hayti, owing to the impossibility of making good the loss of troops or of recruiting in the island. After dwelling on the impossibility of reducing the expenditure to the requisite amount, Ministers explained that they had deferred the evacuation of Hayti "as long as the negotiation which His Majesty had opened with the enemy at Lille, and the disposition of a majority in the two Councils of Legislature in France, left a hope that some immediate arrangement might be made with that country, which in its consequences might operate to relieve England from the intolerable burdens by which the British part of St. Domingo is retained, and to a certain degree to ensure to its inhabitants a continuance of security and protection. . . . The rupture of the negotiation and the avowed system of the present Government of France appear on the one hand to render the attainment of this desirable end precarious, if not remote, whilst on the other they impose on H.M.'s confidential servants an additional obligation of reducing the heavy burdens of a war, the continuance of which is unavoidable, within the narrowest limits, in order to be able to persevere in it until adequate terms of peace can be obtained; and it is certainly their first and essential duty to appropriate the resources of the country with such management and economy as may ensure the preservation and defence of the essential possessions of the Crown. . . ."

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[1] For the disgust of Pitt and Dundas, see "Dropmore P.," iii, 390.

The good faith of Pitt in the Lille negotiation appears clearly in this interesting statement, which further proves that he held on to Hayti in the hope of ceding it to France on terms satisfactory to Great Britain and the colonists. Doubtless it was the perception of this truth which led many of the settlers to decamp after spoiling the Egyptians. The thankless duty of evacuation devolved on Brigadier-General Maitland, who carried it out with skill and patience. Especially admirable is his secret bargain with Toussaint, whereby that able chief agreed not to molest the British either in Hayti or in Jamaica, while in return he was to receive provisions at certain ports under his control. Ministers had not advised any such proceeding, but they cordially approved of it, despite the clamour of the West India planters at a compact with a negro.[1] Thus was laid the basis of that good understanding which subsequently enabled Toussaint to defy Bonaparte.

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[1] Malouet wrote to Pitt on 24th June 1798: "The wisdom of General Maitland's measures, the perfect order in which he has conducted the opera-

The success attending this agreement shows what power England might have wielded had not her King, her Princes, and her Parliament insisted on maintaining intact the institution of slavery. They thereby aroused an enemy more terrible than yellow fever, the negro. France profited by the blunder; but she rushed blindly forward, using the black man with a recklessness which gave him the mastery. On the other hand, if Pitt and Wilberforce had succeeded in carrying out their programme in the years 1790-2, the incendiary devices of Brissot and Victor Hugues would have come to nought. In that case the transfer of Hayti to England would have placed at her disposal myriads of devoted blacks, ready and able to plant the Union Jack on every fortress in the West Indies, and to conquer the colonies of Spain if she changed sides. It was not to be. Far from gaining an accession of strength in that quarter, England lost heavily in men and treasure, and at the Peace of Amiens retained only Trinidad in return for all her sacrifices.

In no part does Pitt's war policy appear to more disadvantage than in the West Indies. He entered into those expeditions when the army at home was unable to meet the demands of the service in Flanders, and on the coasts of Brittany and Provence, not to speak of the needs of Ireland and the East Indies. He allowed Dundas to send out levies which were far too raw to withstand the strain of the tropics. This fact, together with the stupidity of the regulations and the inexperience, or worse, of the medical staff, accounts for the waste of life and the barrenness of these tedious campaigns. At no time had England in the West Indies a force sufficient to withstand the ravages of disease and to overcome the Republicans and their black allies. Nevertheless, while the conduct of the West Indian campaigns is open to censure, it is difficult to see what other course could have been adopted towards those important colonies, in view of the resolve of the French Jacobins to revolutionize them. The attempt was made and partly succeeded. Could Pitt and his colleagues stand merely on the defensive, while incendiaries sought to stir up

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tions have lessened the disasters attending it, and by means of a truce and convention agreed on with the Republican chiefs, not an inconsiderable number of inhabitants has been induced to remain on their plantations" (Pitt MSS., 146).

a war of colour? Was it not the natural and inevitable step to endeavour to extirpate those fire-brands? And when so attractive an offer as that of Hayti was made by the royalist settlers, could the British Government hold timidly aloof and allow that rich land to breed revolt? Surely a servile war could be averted only by intervention at the natural centre of influence. If from Guadeloupe, after its recapture by the French, the seeds of rebellion were sown broadcast, would not Hayti have become a volcano of insurrection? Finally, it is unquestionable that the change of front of the Court of Madrid in the years 1795-6 blighted the whole enterprise at the very time when success seemed attainable. On Godoy, then, not on Pitt, must rest the responsibility for the lamentable waste of life in the West Indies and the ultimate lapse into barbarism of their most fertile island.

CHAPTER XI

THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE: CORSICA: QUIBERON

THE French Jacobins early laid stress on the weakness of the British Empire. An official report issued in January 1793 at Paris advocated a close alliance with Tippoo Sahib, the Raja of Mysore, and recommended that the French force sent to assist him should threaten or secure the Dutch possessions at the Cape of Good Hope, and in Java and Ceylon. "There," it continued, "you would meet only with men enervated by luxury, soft beings that would tremble before the soldiers of liberty." The French conquest of Holland and the capture of the Dutch fleet in the winter of 1794-5 brought these schemes within measurable distance of fulfilment. Failing to save a single Dutch fortress or warship, Pitt and his colleagues became alarmed about the Dutch colonies; and when the lethargic Stadholder and his consort Wilhelmina landed in England, Ministers conferred with him on this topic.

On 7th February 1795, shortly after his arrival at Kew House, thenceforth the scene of his debauches, he drew up an order for the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, bidding him welcome the arrival of a friendly British force, which would save Cape Town from the French. That important post belonged to the Dutch East India Company, then virtually bankrupt, and altogether unable to maintain its neutrality amidst the struggles for a world-empire now entering on a new phase. The officials of the Company at Amsterdam on 3rd February issued warnings to all Dutch ships in British ports to set sail forthwith, and further requested the French Government to secure Dutch vessels from attacks by its war vessels or privateers.[1] A few days later the invaders of Holland laid hands on British ships and detained even the packet-boats. In fact, though the Dutch did not frame an alliance with France until 16th May, it existed in effect from the month of February.[1] These facts explain the action of the Prince of Orange, which is otherwise unjustifiable. It was a natural retort to the conduct of the Dutch authorities. The British archives also show the alarm of our India Board and of its president, Dundas. On 5th February he urged the British East India Company to send in duplicate urgent messages to India. On 8th and 10th February he inquired whether the extra troops needed for India could sail on three of their ships now ready in the Thames; and he requested that some of the Company's troops stationed at St. Helena should proceed to India, their place being taken by drafts from home.[2]

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[1] "F. O.," Holland, 57.

Foremost among Dundas's plans for assuring British supremacy in India was the acquisition of the Cape. Not that he valued the Cape and Egypt on their own account. That generation regarded them merely as half-way-houses to India, witness the curious statement of Sir Francis Baring, Director of the East India Company, to Dundas, that the Cape was of no advantage whatever to us, and might be a dangerous drain upon our population; but in the hands of France it would most seriously menace our interests.[3] Of how many prosperous British colonies has not this been said? For similar reasons we took possession of large parts of India and Canada, not to speak of Malta, portions of Australia, New Zealand, and the Egyptian Soudan.

Early in March Commodore Blankett set sail from Spithead with four ships, having on board part of the 78th regiment, besides marines. The "Sphinx" was to join them at St. Helena. The land forces were commanded by Major-General Sir James Craig. Early in April Rear-Admiral Sir Keith Elphinstone sailed with a larger force, and a further expedition was in preparation under the command of Major-General Alured Clarke. The Cabinet expected little or no resistance, and even referred to a friendly reception as the probable issue. They had some grounds for hope. The Dutch force at the Cape consisted of about 800 German mercenaries, whose pay was far in arrears. It was suggested that we should take them into our pay, and quiet the people by the promise of abolishing the abuses of the Dutch Company. These hopes proved excessive. Craig, on making False Bay on 11th June, soon found Governor Sluysken totally unaffected by the

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[1] "Cape Records," i, 98.

[2] "W. O.," vi, 67.

[3] "Cape Records," i, 17, 22.

Stadholder's letter. He was a man "of the most uncommon *sangfroid*," professing affection to England and dislike of France, but resolved to keep a firm hold of Cape Town. He offered to give the squadron all it wanted, and begged for time to consider the British demand.

Meanwhile mounted burghers poured in from the eastern settlements, and greatly strengthened the Dutch camp, situated in a pass half way between the town and False Bay. These sturdy farmers hoped to win entire independence; for indeed the Dutch East India Company cramped the life of the settlers at every turn. Despite the wealth of that land in corn, cotton, wine, and cattle, it made little progress. The fisheries might have been productive but for the regulations which forbade the colonists even a pleasure boat. The Company claimed one-tenth of the produce of all sales and had the right of pre-emption and of fixing the prices of goods. Settlers might not even kill their own cattle for food without the permission of officials. Cape Town was the only market for foreign commerce, and all products going in and out were subject to heavy dues.[1] Far from thriving on these exclusive rights, that corporation found its funds crippled by the very regulations which impoverished and irritated the burghers. In fact the first aim of the Boers was to trek beyond reach of the arm of the law. Thus came about the settlement of the remote townships, Swellendam and Graaf-Reinet, and thus was implanted in that virile race the resolve to secure complete independence of the enfeebled motherland.

The time seemed to have come when the British force menaced Cape Town. The Boers, no less than the Governor Sluysken, regarded the letter of the Prince as a forgery and the whole affair a mere trick. In vain did Elphinstone and Craig offer guarantees for good government. The officials and soldiery were impressed by the offer of enrolment in the British service, but the armed farmers proved intractable. Not having artillery or sufficient troops, Craig awaited the arrival of reinforcements from St. Helena; but on 14th July he landed about 1,600 men at Simon's Town, and somewhat later began the advance towards Cape Town. With little difficulty his men drove the Dutch from a strong position in the Pass of Muysenberg. On the next day the Dutch advanced from Cape Town with all their force and eight guns, but failed to dislodge Craig, despite his lack of artillery.

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[1] "Cape Records," i, 23-6, 138-40; Cory, "Rise of South Africa," i, ch. ii.

A period of much anxiety ensued, owing to the delay in the arrival of the reinforcements under Major-General Alured Clarke, without which an advance on Cape Town was perilous. The Dutch meanwhile received supplies from interlopers, concerning whom Elphinstone wrote with nautical emphasis: "The seas are infested with Americans, Danes, Genoese, Tuscans, etc., or in other terms smuggling ships, mostly belonging to Britain and Bengal, entrenched with oaths and infamy, who trade to the French islands [Bourbon, etc.] and all the ports in India, changing their flags as is most convenient to them."[1] He therefore forbade any of them to touch at the Cape. On the arrival of Clarke's force Craig took the offensive. About 4,000 strong, the British pushed on towards Cape Town, amidst a dropping fire from the mounted burghers, until they drew near to Wynberg. There the Dutch prepared to offer a stout resistance; but the diversion caused by three British ships entering Table Bay, and firing at Cape Town, unsteadied them; and, after little fighting, they retired towards the capital, crying out that Sluysken had betrayed them. Early on the morrow he offered to surrender; and the Union Jack was hoisted on 16th September.

The conquest was delusively easy. The mounted Boers, who were the heart of the defence, rode off with their arms, vowing vengeance against the invaders; and some hundred of the foreign mercenaries, who entered the British service, soon deserted. On 22nd September Craig wrote that, except the six principal merchants in Cape Town, all the population was hostile, and would certainly join the French, if they appeared, Jacobin ideas being rife alike in town and country. He hoped that the abolition of "the abominable monopolies" would have some effect. After Clarke and most of his troops sailed on to their destination, India, Craig viewed the future with concern, as Cape Town and the neighbouring bays needed a considerable force for adequate defence. The population of Cape Town and district then amounted to 4,957 settlers and their children, 6,068 servants, and 9,049 slaves. In the whole colony there were

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[1] "W. O.," i, 323. In "F. O.," Holland, 57, is a memorial of Elphinstone and Craig to Grenville, stating why they had detained at the Cape the U. S. ship "Argonaut," whose owners now prosecuted them for £100,000.

14,929 free settlers, 11,555 servants, and 19,807 slaves. The oxen numbered 418,817.

The news of the capture of Cape Town caused great relief at Whitehall. Dundas on 16th January 1796 assured Craig that His Majesty would have preferred a peaceful acquisition. The remark does not evince much sagacity; for in that case the Boers would have represented the occupation as an act of trickery concocted with the Prince of Orange. As it was, the Cape was conquered after a fair fight. Undoubtedly in the month of August the burghers might have beaten Craig had they been either well led or enterprising. Dundas also instructed Clarke to leave a strong garrison at Cape Town, and forwarded news of the capture of Trincomalee, the Dutch stronghold in Ceylon. The Dutch soon sent a force of 2,000 troops convoyed by six warships, for the recapture of the Cape; but, while sheltering in Saldanha Bay, some fifty miles north of Cape Town, it was surprised by Elphinstone's squadron and capitulated (17th August 1796). The news of this disaster hastened the surrender of the burghers of Graaf Reinet who had defied British authority.

In order to mark the permanence of British rule, Pitt decided to send out as Governor Lord Macartney, who previously had undertaken a mission to "Louis XVIII" at Verona. His arrival in May 1797 helped to check the growth of discontent which was again becoming formidable. Macartney's difficulties were great. The Dutch held sullenly aloof, in the belief that England must give up her prize at the peace. Our military and naval officers disliked Cape Town, owing to the lack of amusements, the dearness of provisions, and the badness of the roadstead. Admiral Pringle declared to Lady Anne Barnard that, as a naval station, it was the worst that the devil could have contrived; that the people were objectionable, and the animals vile, even the hens being unable to lay fresh eggs. The soldiers grumbled at the high prices; for, though beef was only fourpence a pound, and good wine sixpence a bottle, yet an egg cost threepence and a dish of cauliflowers eighteenpence. Readers of Lady Anne's sprightly letters will note in germ the problem that has beset the British in South Africa.[1] They formed a restless minority among a people curiously unreceptive and suspicious. They were bored by the surroundings, puzzled by

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[1] "South Africa a Century ago." By Lady Anne Barnard.

Dutch elusiveness, and doubtful as to the future. The war was going far from well; and the alliance of Spain with France in the summer of 1796 facilitated attacks from the Canaries and Monte Video. These difficulties were enhanced by the cold and tactless behaviour of Macartney.

Nevertheless Pitt resolved at all costs to hold the Cape. Signs of disgust at the state of affairs in Corsica and the West Indies early figure in his letters; but as to the retention of Cape Town he never wavered. Bonaparte's capture of Egypt in 1798 showed that India was about to be assailed by way of the Red Sea. The greater, then, was the need to retain the stronghold which dominated the sea-route to the East Indies. The resolve of Pitt to assure the communication with India by one or other of the two routes will concern us later. But we may risk the assertion that he would certainly have avoided the blunder of the Addington Ministry in 1802 in giving up the Cape and neglecting to secure Malta against recapture by Napoleon. Early in the course of the Napoleonic War, Pitt resolved at all costs to retain Malta and to re-conquer the Cape. During the negotiations of 1805 with Russia he refused to allow the discussion of our title to Malta; and in the parleys with Prussia a little later he distinctly excepted the Cape from the list of the conquered colonies which Britain might be willing to restore at the general peace.[1] Six days before Pitt expressed this resolve, Nelson won his last and greatest triumph, thus enabling the Prime Minister to deal with full effect the blow which won Cape Colony for the British flag. It is clear, then, that Pitt discerned the enormous importance of that station as an outwork of India. In fact, after the expedition of Bonaparte to Egypt and the renewal of his oriental schemes in 1803, no statesman worthy of the name could fail to see that either Egypt and Malta, or the Cape of Good Hope, must belong to the mistress of the East Indies. In the last resort, then, it was the world-policy of Napoleon which planted the Union Jack for ever both at Malta and the Cape of Good Hope.

Naval campaigns almost of necessity resolve themselves into a series of experiments; and after the failure of the attempt to hold Toulon, a blow at Corsica was the natural sequel. At a time when Great Britain had no post within the Mediterranean, that island was a most desirable prize. Its supplies of naval stores to the dockyard at Toulon were of the highest value to the French; and Nelson declared the occupation of Corsica to be imperatively necessary, as it furnished that dockyard with the decks, sides, and straight timbers for ships.[1] Accordingly, after the evacuation of Toulon by the Allies in December 1793, Admiral Hood decided to effect the reduction of the island for the royalist cause.

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 70. Pitt to Harrowby, 27th October 1805.

Already, while at Toulon, he had received an urgent invitation from Paoli, the leader of the Royalist, or British, party in Corsica, to help the islanders in driving out the French. Victor in the long feud against the Bonapartes, whom he expelled at midsummer, Paoli now resolved to root out the Jacobins, and his Anglophil leanings induced him to offer the crown of Corsica to George III. Both the King and his Ministers received the offer favourably, Pitt and Grenville regarding Corsica as one of the indemnities to be exacted from France. Sir Gilbert Elliot, the King's Commissioner in the Mediterranean, was therefore charged to administer Corsica. Disputes between Admiral Hood and General Dundas, the commander of the British troops, somewhat hampered the sieges of the three French garrisons still holding out; but by August 1794 Calvi, the last hope of the French, succumbed to the vigour of the attack of General Stuart, effectively helped by Nelson, who there lost the sight of his right eye.

Subsequent events in Corsica, although of great interest, are not closely connected with the life of Pitt; and I therefore propose to describe them and the details of the Quiberon expedition in the volume entitled "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters." In this chapter only the incidents which more particularly concern Pitt will be noticed.

The attempt to rule that most clannish and suspicious of Mediterranean peoples first called forth the administrative powers of Sir Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto. Acting as Viceroy of Corsica, he sought to promote contentment by promulgating an excellent constitution and administrative reforms. But, being hampered from the outset by the factious behaviour of Paoli, he, with the consent of the Cabinet, deported him to England in the autumn of 1795. An equally serious complication was the feud between the British army and navy. These disputes, originating at Toulon, grew apace in Corsica. Elliot sided with Hood, and was therefore detested by Dundas, his successor, Sir Charles Stuart, and their coadjutor, Colonel Moore. This brilliant young officer, by nature somewhat a *frondeur*, was finally guilty of expressions so disrespectful as to lead to his removal shortly before that of Paoli. He carried his complaints to Pitt, who bade him set forth his case dispassionately. Indeed, so impressed was he with Moore's abilities, that he decided to employ him in the West Indies, and afterwards advanced him to posts of high importance.

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[1] "Nelson Despatches," ii, 5.

Pitt took little interest in Corsica, leaving it to the intermittent attentions of Portland. Consequently that interesting experiment had not a fair chance. The possession of the island was also nearly useless in a military sense; for the British garrison could spare no detachments, which, even with the help of the loyal Corsicans, could effectively harass the French forces campaigning in the Genoese Riviera. Elliot entered into relations with the Knights of Malta, and in other ways sought to develop a Mediterranean policy; but in this he met with scant support from London. In excuse of Pitt it must be said that he had his hands more than full elsewhere. Moreover the peace between France and Spain, framed in July 1795, caused him great concern, especially as the Court of Madrid manifested deep resentment at the British occupation of Corsica. In October 1795 Pitt inclined strongly towards peace, and thenceforth carried on the war mainly with a view to securing indemnities. Corsica apparently he now looked on as burdensome; for in his speech of 9th December 1795 he did not include it among the three valued acquisitions of the war—Martinique, Cape Nicholas Mole (in Hayti), and the Cape of Good Hope. Dundas always looked on the occupation of Corsica as prejudicial to the colonial efforts which held the first place in his thoughts. Accordingly it was not utilized in the spring of 1796, when expeditions ought to have set forth to hamper the march of Bonaparte's ill-equipped columns along the coast from Nice to Savona.

The opportunity then lost was never to return. Bonaparte's triumphs in Italy enabled him to prepare at Leghorn to deal a blow for the recovery of his native island. Checked for the time by the other claims of the war and the presence of Nelson, he kept this aim in view; and the conquest of North and Central Italy at the close of that campaign compromised the safety of the small British and *émigré* force in Corsica. The final reason, however, for the evacuation of the island was neither the menace from Italy nor the discontent of the islanders, but the alliance of Spain with France. As Nelson foresaw, that event endangered the communications with England. Ministers also knew that a plan was on foot for a French invasion of Ireland, which, as we shall see, was attempted at the end of the year. They therefore determined to concentrate their forces for home defence and the protection of the most important possessions, a decision which involved the abandonment of the Mediterranean. Accordingly, on 31st August 1796, Portland sent orders for the evacuation of Corsica and of Elba. For a few days in the latter half of October Ministers revoked these orders, and bade Elliot hold firm, their hope being to tempt the Empress Catharine to active co-operation against France by the cession of Corsica to her. Whether that wily potentate saw through this device is doubtful; for she died on 16th November. Her death put an end to the fleeting hope of opposing France with an equality of force; for the bent of her successor, Paul I, was at first towards peace.

Despite the comparative neglect of Mediterranean affairs by Pitt at this time, they exerted a profound influence upon his career. In view of the many claims upon the British navy, it was perhaps impossible to exert upon the coast of Nice and Genoa the pressure which Elliot desired; but the failure to do so in the spring of 1796 enabled Bonaparte to win the triumphs which changed the history of the world. Further, the British occupation of Corsica, scarcely less than that of Hayti, aroused keen jealousy at Madrid, and thus helped to set in motion forces which for the time checkmated England in the Mediterranean. Not until the Spaniards were beaten by Jervis and Nelson could she stretch forth her trident over that sea, first from Minorca and finally from Malta. The loss of Corsica was keenly felt. For, had England made full use of that island as a base of operations, Bonaparte could not have carried out his Egyptian expedition in 1798. Austria also ascribed her overthrow in Venetia and Styria to the withdrawal of the British fleet from the Mediterranean. That step seemed a confession of pitiable weakness, though in reality it enabled the Government to concentrate the fleet at points more important than Bastia and Ajaccio.

Amidst the disasters at the end of the Flemish campaign of 1794 Pitt sought to divert the energies of England to a more promising field. Thwarted on the Lower Rhine by the vacillations of the German Powers and the torpor of the Dutch, he hoped for success among the Royalists of Brittany and ia Vendée. He framed this decision reluctantly; for it involved co-operation with the French princes, the Comte de Provence and the Comte d'Artois, and with the swarms of fanatical *émigrés* who had long pestered him with mad projects. Further, he had always been loath to declare for the restoration of the Bourbons. To do so would be to flaunt the *fleur-de-lis* in the face of a nation which hated all that pertained to the old régime. Besides, it implied a surrender to the clique headed by Burke and Windham, which scoffed at the compromise between monarchy and democracy embodied in the French constitution of 1791. Pitt, with his innate moderation and good sense, saw the folly of these reactionary views and the impossibility of forcing them upon the French people. Nevertheless, as an experiment in the course of that bewildering strife, he had recourse to the *émigrés*.

The accession of Windham to the Cabinet, in July 1794, had strengthened their influence at Westminster; and incidents which occurred in France during the winter of 1794-5 evinced a decline of Jacobinical enthusiasm. The sentiment of loyalty, damped by the chilling personality of Louis XVI and the follies of his brothers, revived now that the little Louis XVII was being slowly done to death by his gaolers in the Temple. The rapacity and vulgar ostentation of the Thermidorian party, then in power, provoked general disgust; and despair of any satisfactory settlement began to range friends of order on the side of the monarchy. The late American envoy at Paris, Gouverneur Morris, informed Bland Burges at our Foreign Office, on 28th June 1795, that the state of France was so desperate as to admit of cure only by the restoration of the old dynasty; that the recent death of Louis XVII was a benefit to the cause inasmuch as his mind had been completely brutalized; and finally the envoy heartily wished success to every effort to overthrow the despicable Government at Paris.

Though the Royalist leaders in the west of France early in the year 1795 made a truce with the Republic, yet the resumption of the civil war in that quarter was known to be only a question of time. Windham, therefore, urged the despatch of an expedition to Brittany. His royalist zeal had now developed his powers to their utmost. Early in the course of the French Revolution the chivalry of his nature detached him from the Foxites. The glow and beauty of his periods marked him out as the successor of Burke in the House of Commons; yet in no respect did he attain complete success. His speeches were too refined and subtle for that audience; and, worse still, his diffidence or torpor led him often to miss opportunities of effective intervention. The sensitiveness of his nature appeared in his falling in love at first sight with a Highland girl whom Burke and he casually met during a tour. His loss of her made a painful impression on him.[1] The butt of an unkind fate, he seemed destined also to be the leader of lost causes; and the proud and penniless *émigrés* found in him their most devoted friend.

Despite the opposition of Dundas, and the doubts of Pitt, his views prevailed; and preparations began for an Anglo-French expedition to the coast of Brittany. During the winter there had arrived in London a Breton leader of gigantic stature and considerable mental powers, the Comte de Puisaye. He had fought devotedly for the constitutional monarchy in that great province and had the confidence of its inhabitants, whether nobles or peasants (*Chouans*). But French princes and the cliques of "pure" Royalists looked on him, as Marie Antoinette looked on Mirabeau, merely as a rebel who had partly seen the error of his ways. Secretly they resolved to make use of him, as he had gained the confidence of Windham and Pitt, but to throw him over at the first opportunity.

Meanwhile the Cabinet began to equip regiments of French Royalists destined to form the spearhead of the "Royal and Catholic Army." Various causes delayed the preparations, the chief being the absence in North Germany of seasoned corps of *émigrés* whose presence in Brittany was essential. Puisaye therefore urged Ministers to allow him to enrol recruits from among the French prisoners of war in England—a dangerous device which, unfortunately, was adopted. Undoubtedly the initiative in this matter rested with him; and it is noteworthy that other royalist leaders had tried the plan, hitherto with no untoward results.[2] Prisoners were not forced into the new corps; but it is clear that some of them enlisted in order to get back to France. As for the finances of the enterprise, they were partly met by the manufacture of royalist *assignats*. Whether they were like the forged *assignats* manufactured, with the connivance of Government, near Hexham and Durham, is not clear. It is alleged by royalist writers that they bore a mark ensuring identification, so that, in case of a monarchist triumph, they would be duly honoured. The chief aim, however, certainly was to discredit the republican notes and to embarrass the Parisian Government. That Pitt should in any way have countenanced these underhand devices is discreditable.

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[1] "Corresp. of Sir John Sinclair," i, 141-3.

[2] Puisaye, "Mems.," ii, 594-603; Forneron, "Hist. des Emigrés," ii, 13, 14.

Owing to the declaration of war by Holland (May 1795), the vacillations of Spain, and the determination of George III to keep troops in Hanover,[1] very few British were available for the enterprise. It is worth noting that the King disliked the *émigrés* and often shocked Windham by assertions at Court that they would prove false. His influence was used steadily against all attempts in their favour. There were, indeed, good grounds for suspicion even at this time. Seeing that Charette and other Breton leaders still observed the truce with the Republic, the risks of a landing were great; and this explains the reluctance of the Cabinet to allow the Comte d'Artois to proceed with the first contingent.[2] It was charged to occupy the Quiberon Peninsula as a base for further exertions, to supply arms to the Bretons, and thus prepare for a general rising, the effect of which would be clinched by the arrival of a larger force. The vanguard set sail from Spithead on 17th June 1795. It consisted of some 3,800 *émigrés*, under the general command of Puisaye, though by some mistake in drafting the orders, considerable power was given to Comte d'Hervilly, the senior officer of the subsidized regiments. At first all went well. The convoying fleet under Lord Bridport, after capturing three French sail-of-the-line off l'Orient, made Quiberon Bay and assisted in the capture of Fort Penthièvre, commanding the narrow isthmus (3rd July).

Disputes now began between Puisaye and Hervilly, the former desiring to push on boldly, while the latter insisted on remaining in the peninsula. Time was thus given for the republican general, Hoche, to collect his forces and make spirited attacks upon the invaders, who soon fell a prey to schism and discouragement. The doom of the expedition was decided by the treacherous surrender of the fort to Hoche's men at the close of a night attack (21st July). As day dawned the Republicans drove their foes into the peninsula. Wild scenes of panic ensued. A storm having compelled the larger British warships to keep in the offing, Puisaye went off in a boat to beg succour from Admiral Warren. The defence speedily collapsed. De Sombreuil, who was left in command near the tip of the tongue of land, unaccountably surrendered, though a British corvette, the "Lark," and gunboats were effectively covering his flank. At the instigation of Tallien, the French Convention disavowed the promise of its officers at Quiberon to spare the lives of those who laid down their arms; and 712 Royalists were shot down in cold blood at Auray and neighbouring places.

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[1] Cornwallis, "Corresp.," iii, 289.

[2] "F. O.," France, 44. Grenville to d'Harcourt, 19th June 1795.

The evidence proves that the Pitt Ministry had done its best for this expedition, which went to pieces owing to the quarrels of its leaders and the refusal of Charette to stir a finger on behalf of Puisaye, whom he detested. For the final massacre Tallien and the French Convention are wholly responsible. Yet it suited the tactics of the English Opposition to accuse Pitt of planning the death of the French Royalists. Fox, in one of his wildest outbreaks, charged Ministers with deliberately sending noble gentlemen to a massacre. Sheridan, too, declared that, though British blood had not flowed, yet "British honour had bled at every pore." These reckless mis-statements have been refuted by the testimony of La Jaille, Vauban, and Puisaye, royalist officers who escaped.

Before these horrible events were known in England, Ministers prepared to succour the vanguard at Quiberon. News that Spain had made peace with France in a highly suspicious manner weakened this second effort, it being necessary to safeguard the British West Indies from a probable attack by the Spaniards. As no more than four newly raised British regiments could be spared for the Biscay coast, the Earl of Moira threw up the command, which General Doyle then accepted. It seems probable that by 3rd August Pitt doubted the expendiency of sending a second expedition to Brittany or la Vendée. Nevertheless, the Comte d'Artois, who about that time arrived at Spithead from North Germany with a force of *émigrés*, desired to make the venture, relying on Charette, and other royalist chiefs who had once more aroused the men of the West. The Count also cherished the hope that the numerous bands of malcontents in Paris would overthrow that tottering Government.

Events turned out otherwise. The first plan, that of occupying Noirmoutier, an island close to the Vendéan coast, proving impracticable, Doyle sailed to a smaller island, Yeu, farther out at sea. There the 5,500 troops, miserably cramped and underfed, waited until the Comte d'Artois should make good his boast of throwing himself into a boat, if need be, in order to join his faithful Charette. It was soon apparent that he preferred to stay in Yeu with his mistress, Mme. Polastron. In vain did the Bretons under Puisaye and Vauban, and the Vendéans under Charette, beg him to join them. Meanwhile, amid the early autumn rains the troops deteriorated, and the royalist rising at Paris proved a miserable fiasco, some 30,000 National Guards being scattered by a small force well handled by Bonaparte and Barras (5th October). Finally, a deputation of Bretons proceeded to Yeu, and begged Artois to place himself at the head of the numerous bands of devoted gentlemen and peasants who still awaited his appearance. All was in vain. *Je ne veux pas aller Chouanner* (play the Chouan) was his reply (12th November). On the morrow he informed Vauban that he had received orders from England to return at once. This assertion was at the time generally believed to be false; the letters of Grenville to the Prince prove it to be grossly exaggerated. To the despair and disgust of his soldiers he departed, and finally sought refuge from his creditors in Holyrood Castle. The British and French royalist regiments were withdrawn with much difficulty during the storms of December 1795. Nearly all the horses had to be destroyed.

Undoubtedly Pitt and Grenville had become disgusted with the torpor of Artois and the follies of the French Royalists. In particular the absurd failure at Paris seems to have prompted the resolve of the Cabinet to withdraw the British troops from Yeu. Pitt's letters of the latter half of October also evince a desire to pave the way for some understanding with the French Directory. As that Government was firmly installed in power, an opportunity presented itself, for the first time since the opening of the war, of arranging a lasting peace. These hopes were to be blighted; but it is certain that Pitt cherished them; and, doubtless, among the motives operating in favour of peace the foremost was a feeling of disgust at the poltroonery of the French Princes and the incurable factiousness of their followers, in whom the faculties which command success were lost amidst vices and perversities sufficient to ruin the best of causes. Pitt continued to support the Chouans by money and arms; but, despite the frequent protests of Windham, not a British soldier was landed on that coast.[1]

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[1] On 19th January 1798 Pitt, Windham, and Canning agreed to give £9,082 and £9,400 for the discharge of debts due for services of the Royalists in France, incurred in England and France respectively, leaving a balance of £8,000 for future payment. The following sums were paid to the Duc d'Harcourt for the support of "Monsieur": in 1796, £3,000; in 1797, £9,000; and after May 1798 at the rate of £500 per month (B.M. Add. MSS., 37844). I have not found the sums allowed to the Comte d'Artois.

CHAPTER XII

PITT AS WAR MINISTER (1793-8)

Si vous affaiblissez vos moyens en partageant vos forces, si vous rompez en Italie l'unité de la pensée militaire, je vous le dis avec douleur, vous aurez perdu la plus belle occasion d'imposer des lois à l'Italie. . . . La guerre est comme le gouvernement, c'est une affaire de tact.—NAPOLEON, Letters of 14th May 1796.

IN estimating the services of Pitt as War Minister during the first phases of the conflict we must remember that the ambition of his life was to be a Peace Minister. Amidst the exhaustion caused by the American War, he deemed it essential to ensure the continuous growth of savings and investments which, under favourable conditions, advance at the rate of Compound Interest. His success in the time of peace 1783-93, may be measured by the fact that, despite the waste of war, the rate of progress was not seriously checked in the years 1793-6. A Scotsman, MacRitchie, who travelled through England in 1795[1] was surprised to find the large towns in a most flourishing state; and it is well known that the exports of cottons largely increased in the last decade of the century. Seeing that the war became "a contention of purse," the final triumph of England may be ascribed to the reserve of strength which Pitt had helped to assure. He did not live on to witness the issue of the economic struggle brought about by the Continental System of Napoleon. But a study of the commercial war of the years 1806-13 shows that Pitt's forethought enabled Britain to foil the persistent efforts of her mightiest enemy.

Military critics will, however, reply that Pitt's economies in the earlier period so far weakened her army as to lead to the failures of the Revolutionary War. There is some force in this contention. A closer examination, however, will reveal facts that necessarily weaken it. Firstly, England had never kept up a large army in time of peace. Dislike of a standing army was almost inconceivably strong; and it is certain that an attempt by Pitt to maintain an army in excess of the ordinary peace establishment would have aroused a powerful opposition. He therefore concentrated his efforts on the navy; and the maritime triumphs of the war were due in the last resort to his fostering care. As for the army, he kept it at its normal strength until the spring of the year 1792, when he decided to effect some reductions. In one sense this decision is creditable to him. It proves that he neither desired nor expected a rupture with France. In his view the risks of war were past. After his surrender to the Empress Catharine in 1791 peace seemed assured. Further, his decision to reduce the British Army was formed before the declaration of war by France against Austria (20th April 1792). After the rupture of France with Sardinia and Prussia it appeared the height of madness for a single disorganized State to enlarge the circle of its enemies. Consequently, up to the second week of November 1792, Pitt and Grenville were fully justified in expecting the duration of peace for Great Britain. Here, as at many points in the ensuing struggle, it was the impossible which happened.

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[1] "Diary of a Tour through Great Britain in 1795," by W. MacRitchie (1897).

Is Pitt to be blamed for effecting economies which led to a reduction of taxes and an alleviation of the burdens of the poor? The chief danger of the years 1791, 1792 came not from the French Jacobins, but from their British sympathizers; and experience warranted the belief that, with a lightening of the financial load, the nation would manifest its former loyalty. On 23rd August 1791 Grenville wrote: "Our only danger is at home, and for averting that danger, peace and economy are our best resources."[1] These considerations are political rather than military. But it is impossible to separate the two spheres. The strength of the army depends ultimately on the strength of the nation.

It is also well to remember that systematic preparation for war was an outcome of that struggle. Conscription was a bequest of the French Revolution. Planned first by Carnot, it was carried out by Dubois Crancé and others in 1798. But in 1793 the days of large armies had not dawned. It was usual to maintain small forces of professional soldiers, together with a more or less inefficient militia. In England methods not unlike those of the age of Falstaff still held good. War was an adventure, not a science. In France first it became an intensely national effort. The Jacobins evoked the popular enthusiasm; the Committee of Public Safety embodied it in citizen armies; and the science of Carnot and Napoleon led them to victories which shattered the old-world systems and baffled the forecasts of Pitt.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," ii, 172.

Let us briefly survey the conduct of the war by Pitt in its chief stages up to the year 1798. The first period is from the declaration of war in February 1793, to the Battle of Fleurus, near the close of June 1794. At the outset he is alarmed by the irruption of Dumouriez into Holland, and hastily sends a small British force under the Duke of York, solely for the defence of Helvoetsluys and its neighbourhood. It answers its purpose; the French are held up at the Hollandsdiep, while the Austrians crush their main force at Neerwinden. Thereupon Coburg claims the Duke's assistance in driving the Republicans from the fortresses of French Flanders. Pitt and his colleagues give their assent, because the enterprise seems easy after the defection of Dumouriez, and Dunkirk is a tempting prize near to hand, but mainly owing to their urgent desire that Austria shall find her indemnity not in Bavaria, but in the French border fortresses. Thus, for reasons which are political, rather than military, the Cabinet embarks an insufficient force on what proves to be a lengthy and hazardous enterprise. Further, while the British push on, Prussia holds back; so that the Duke of York virtually takes the place of the Prussian contingent. Unaware of the duplicity of Berlin, and trusting that the Allies will soon master the border strongholds, Pitt and Dundas prepare to harry the coasts of France, and to secure her most valuable colony, Hayti. These are their chief aims in the war. But, while preparing maritime expeditions, they also drift into a continental campaign, from which they find it hard to withdraw.

The efforts put forth at Toulon and in Corsica were the outcome of the treaties with Austria, Sardinia, and Naples, which required the appearance of a British fleet off the coasts of France and Italy. While seeking to strengthen both the Coalition and the Royalists of Provence, Admiral Hood's force found an unexpected sphere of action at Toulon. In August 1793 that city admitted the British troops and a Spanish force a few days later. Thereupon Pitt claimed the help which he had a right to expect from his Allies. Naples and Sardinia sent contingents deficient in quality or numbers; and the Court of Vienna, after promising to send 5,000 troops from the Milanese, neglected to do so. Quarrels and suspicions hampered the defence; but the arrival of the Austrian contingent would probably have turned the scale. Owing to the length of time required for despatches from Toulon to reach London, Pitt and his colleagues did not hear of the remissness of Austria until 22nd December, that is, five days after the fall of that stronghold. Had they known it a month earlier, they could have sent thither the large force, then mustering in the Solent, which on 26th November set sail for the West Indies.

This seems an unpardonable diffusion of efforts. But Ministers must already have regretted their readiness to take up the duties incumbent on Prussia in Flanders; and doubtless they resolved not to play the part of the willing horse at Toulon. In the early days of every league there comes a time when an active Power must protest against the shifty ways which are the curse of Coalitions. Besides, Pitt had to keep in view the interests of Great Britain. These were, firstly, to guard the Low Countries against French aggression, and, secondly, to gain an indemnity for the expenses of the war either in the French West Indies, or in Corsica. The independence of the Low Countries was a European question. The maritime conquests concerned England alone. Were Britons to shelve their own interests for a question of international import? The statesman who does so will not long hold the reins at Westminster. Besides, no device for weakening France was deemed more effective than that of seizing her wealthiest group of colonies. On the other hand, there was pressing need of armed help for the Royalists of Brittany; and on this ground we must pronounce the West India enterprise ill timed. A still worse blunder was the continued inactivity of Moira's force in the Solent and the Channel Islands. The reports of an intended French invasion form a wholly inadequate excuse for his inaction. His troops could have rendered valuable service either in Brittany, Flanders, or at Toulon. The riddle of their inaction has never been solved. Ultimately the blame must rest with Pitt, Dundas, and Lord Chatham.[1]

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[1] In "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 27, are Dundas's instructions to Moira, dated 20th November 1793, appointing him Major-General in an expedition

In 1794 Pitt hoped to retrieve the failures of the first campaign and to wear down the French defence. For this purpose he liberally subsidized Austria and concluded with Prussia a treaty which, with better management, might have brought a second highly efficient army into Flanders. The compacts of that springtide warranted the hope that 340,000 allied troops would advance on the north and north-east frontiers of France. They were not forthcoming; but, even as it was, the Imperialists and the Duke of York routed the French levies in Flanders and seemed about to open the way to Paris. Earl Howe's victory, named "the glorious first of June," ensured supremacy in the Channel. Brittany and la Vendée were again aflame. The Union Jack replaced the tricolour on the strongholds of Corsica and in the most fertile parts of the West Indies. In April—May 1794 the collapse of the Jacobins seemed imminent.

But these early triumphs of the Allies were almost as fatal as their later disasters. Indeed they were largely the cause of them. Believing that they had the game in their hands, Prussia and Austria relaxed their efforts at the very time when France girded herself for a mightier struggle. Moreover, the emergence of the Polish Question in an acute phase served once again to distract the German rivals and to weaken their efforts in the West. Moreover, the Anglo-Prussian Treaty of May 1794 prescribing the valley of the Meuse as the sphere of action of the 62,400 Prussians subsidized by England and Holland was so rigid as to furnish their generals with good excuses for refusing to march from the Palatinate across the front of the French columns now pressing forward. The upshot was that England and the Dutch Republic got nothing in return for their subsidies, while the Prussians on their side chafed at the insistent demands from London and The Hague for the exact fulfilment of the bargain. The situation was annoying for military men; and the British Government erred in tying them down too stringently to a flank march, which was fraught with danger after the long delay of Pitt in ratifying the compact (6th-23rd May); while the postponement in the payment of the first subsidies gave

to Guernsey, with Admiral MacBride, taking with him a Hessian corps as soon as it arrives. He is to seize St. Malo or any place near it suitable for helping the Royalists and harassing the enemy. If he deems success doubtful, he is to await reinforcements. The aim is to help the cause of Louis XVII and lead to a general pacification.

the Prussians a good excuse for inaction.[1] His remonstrance to the Prussian envoy in London, at the close of September 1794, was also unwise. For it exceeded the more measured protests of Grenville, and furnished the Berlin Court with the desired excuse for recalling its troops from the Rhine. In short, the campaign of 1794 failed, not so much because the French were in superior force at the battles of Turcoing and Fleurus, as because the Allies at no point worked cordially together. The intrusion of political motives hampered their generals and turned what ought to have been an overwhelming triumph into a disgracefully tame retreat.

The disasters at Turcoing and Fleurus open up the second stage of the war. Realizing more and more the difficulty of defending Holland and Hanover, Pitt seeks to end that campaign and to concentrate on colonial enterprises and the war in Brittany and la Vendée. Experience of the utter weakness of his Administration for purposes of war also leads him to strengthen it at the time of the union with the Old Whigs. They demanded that their leader, the Duke of Portland, should take the Home Office. On Dundas demurring to this, Grenville generously assented to Pitt's suggestion that he should vacate the Foreign Office (6th July). Fortunately the Duke declined to take it; and Pitt resolved to make drastic changes, especially by curtailing the functions of the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, and creating a War Ministry of Cabinet rank. Some change was clearly requisite; for of late Dundas had supervised internal affairs, including those of Ireland, as well as the conduct of the war; as Treasurer of the Navy he managed its finances, and, as President of the India Board, he sought to control the affairs of that Empire. As for the War Office, it was a petty office, controlled by a nonentity, Sir Charles Yonge, who was soon to be transferred to the Mint.

In the haphazard allotment of military business to the Commander-in-Chief, Amherst, to the head clerk of the War Office, Yonge, and to the overworked pluralist, Dundas, we discern the causes of disaster. The war with France being unforeseen, Pitt had to put up with these quaint arrangements; but the reverses in Flanders and the incoming of the Portland Whigs now enabled him to reduce chaos to order. He insisted that the

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 96-8.

Secretary of State for Home Affairs should cease to direct the course of the war, but consented that colonial business should fall to his lot. On the other hand he greatly enlarged the functions of the War Office. His will prevailed. On 7th July Portland agreed to become Home Secretary, while his supporter, Windham, came into the re-organized War Office as Secretary at War, Dundas becoming Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. Despite the obvious need of specializing and strengthening these Departments, the resistance of Dundas was not easily overcome. His letter to Pitt on this subject betrays a curious cloudiness of vision on a subject where clearness is essential:

Wimbledon, *July* 9, 1794.[1]

. . . The idea of a War Minister as a separate Department you must on recollection be sensible cannot exist in this country. The operations of war are canvassed and adjusted in the Cabinet, and become the joint act of His Majesty's servants; and the Sec^{y} of State who holds the pen does no more than transmit their sentiments. I do not mean to say that there is not at all times in H. M.'s Councils some particular person who has, and ought to have, a leading and even an overruling ascendency in the conduct of public affairs; and that ascendency extends to war as it does to every other subject. Such you are at present as the Minister of the King. Such your father was as Secretary of State. Such you would be if you was Secretary of State, and such Mr. Fox would be if he was Secretary of State and the Duke of Bedford First Lord of the Treasury. In short it depends, and must ever depend, on other circumstances than the particular name by which a person is called; and if you was to have a Secretary of State for the War Department tomorrow, not a person living would ever look upon him, or any other person but you, as the War Minister. All modern wars are a contention of purse, and unless some very peculiar circumstance occurs to direct the lead into another channel, the Minister of Finance must be the Minister of War. Your father for obvious reasons was an exception to the rule.

It is impossible for any person to controvert the position I now state; and therefore, when you talk of a War Minister, you must mean a person to superintend the detail of the execution of the operations which are determined upon. But do you think it possible to persuade the public that such a separate Department can be necessary? Yourself, so far as a general superintendence is necessary, must take that into your own hands. If it was in the hands of any other, it would lead to a constant wrangling between him and the various Executive Boards.

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[1] Chevening MSS.

The illogicality of this letter would be amusing if it had not been so disastrous. Because war depends ultimately on money, therefore (said Dundas) the Chancellor of the Exchequer ought to control its operations and act virtually as Secretary of State for War. Then why not also as First Lord of the Admiralty? No sooner is the question formulated than we see that Dundas is confusing two very different things, namely, general financial control and the administration of military affairs. In fact, Dundas still clung to the old customs which allotted to the Secretaries of State wide and often overlapping duties. He did not see the need of a specialized and authoritative War Office, though the triumphs achieved by Carnot and the Committee of Public Safety during the past twelvemonth might have opened his eyes. Fortunately, Pitt discerned the necessity of strengthening that Department; and, as we have seen, he made Dundas and Windham War Ministers, with seats in the Cabinet. Thus from July 1794 military affairs had a chance of adequate treatment in that body; and Pitt deserves great credit for remodelling the Cabinet in a way suited to the exigencies of modern warfare.

Why did he not appoint that experienced soldier, the Marquis Cornwallis, Secretary of State for War? The answer is that he designed him as successor to the Duke of York in Flanders. As has already appeared, Pitt framed this resolve in February 1794, on the return of Cornwallis from India; and, though rebuffed then, he continued to revolve the matter until the beginning of the autumn, when the opposition of George III and of Francis II of Austria prevented the appointment of that experienced soldier to the supreme command of the Allies. As for the accession of Windham to the War Department, it seems to have been merely a device to satisfy the Old Whigs. Probably the question was not even discussed until 4th July, when the Duke of Portland first named it to Windham. As it finds no place in the Pitt-Grenville letters until 7th July, we may infer that Pitt and Dundas accepted Windham with some reluctance as an ardent partisan of Burke and the *émigrés*. Windham now persistently urged an expedition to Brittany; and the Quiberon and Yeu enterprises were largely due to him. Pitt and Dundas, after their experience of the *émigrés*, had no great hope in these efforts; and after the defection of Spain they discerned the increasing need of concentrating their efforts on home defence and operations which safeguarded British interests in the East and West Indies. To these causes may be ascribed their decision to withdraw the British force from the island of Yeu. The indignant letters of Windham to Pitt in 1796-8 show that, after the Yeu fiasco and the beginning of the peace negotiations with France, his advice was slighted. His moanings to Mrs. Crewe over the degeneracy of the age also tell their tale. In October 1796 he merely "drags on" at the War Office until he sees what turn things will take.

Pitt's determination to ensure efficiency in the services appears from two incidents of the closing weeks of 1794. He deposed Lord Chatham from the Admiralty in favour of the far more efficient Lord Spencer; and he removed the Duke of York from the command in Holland. Another change remains to be noted, namely, the retirement of the Master General of the Ordnance. The Duke of Richmond had for some time ceased to attend the meetings of the Cabinet. During six months Pitt put up with this peevishness; but on the receipt of alarming news from Holland, he exerted his authority. On 27th January 1795 he informed Richmond that his long absence from the Cabinet and his general aloofness would make his return unpleasant and "embarrassing to public business. This consideration," he added "must decide my opinion . . . and at this critical time it seems indispensable to make some such arrangement as shall substitute some other efficient military aid in so important a Department."[1] This cutting note produced the desired result. Richmond resigned and Cornwallis took his place at the Ordnance and in the Cabinet. No change was more beneficial. During the next three years the Ministry had the advice of the ablest soldier of the generation preceding that of Wellington. Unfortunately the Cornwallis letters are so few that his share in the shaping of war policy is unknown; but it is clear that he helped Ministers finally to override the resolve of the King to keep the relic of the British force for the defence of Hanover.[2]

To conclude the survey of these changes, we may note that the Duke of York, after returning from Holland, became Commander-in-Chief of the British army, a situation in which he earned general approbation. Thus, when it is asserted that Pitt altogether lacked his father's power of discerning military talents, the reply must be that he rendered an incalculable service by organizing a competent War Ministry, that he put the right men in the right place, though at the cost of offending the King, the Duke of York, a powerful nobleman, and his own brother; and that he quickly noted the transcendent abilities of Moore even when under censure for acts of disobedience in Corsica. The results attained by the elder Pitt were far more brilliant; for he came to the front at a time when the problems were far less difficult and illusory than those of the Revolutionary Era; but, if the very diverse conditions of their times be considered, the services of Pitt will not suffer by comparison even with those of his father.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

[2] "Cornwallis Corresp.," ii, 289.

The torpor of the Dutch in defending their country and the refusal of the Duke of Brunswick to organize the defence of North Germany virtually ended the war on that side. In one respect the defection of Prussia in April 1795 proved beneficial; for she undertook to keep the States of North and Central Germany entirely neutral. Had George III condescended at once to place his Electorate under her covering wing, the whole British and subsidized force might have been withdrawn in the spring of that year. Pride, however, for some time held him back from that politic but humiliating step. Consequently several battalions remained in Hanover for so long a time as to weaken the blow dealt at Paris through Quiberon. This was highly prejudicial to the Breton movement, which would have found in the troops detained in Germany the firm nucleus that was so much needed. Even after the ghastly failure at Quiberon, had the French *émigré* corps arrived at Spithead at the end of July instead of August, the expedition to the Vendéan coast might have ended differently. It is usual to blame Pitt or Dundas for the delay in those preparations. But George must be held finally responsible. As to the Quiberon disaster, it has been proved to result from the hot-headedness of Puisaye, the criminal carelessness of Hervilly, and the ceaseless schisms of the Royalists.

With the alliance of the Dutch and French Republics in May 1795, and the almost open avowal of the French cause by the Court of Madrid in July, the war entered upon a third phase. Thenceforth the colonial motive was paramount at Westminster for Pitt and his colleagues questioned the wisdom of holding Corsica. On the other hand they sought to safeguard India by seizing the Cape of Good Hope, and to preserve Hayti from the inroads of the French, to whom Spain handed over her possession, San Domingo. Unfortunately the greater the prominence accorded to colonial affairs, the wider grew the breach with Spain, until in October 1796 the Court of Madrid declared war. Is Pitt to be blamed for the rupture with Spain? From the standpoint of Burke and Windham he is open to grave censure. Surveying the course of events from their royalist minaret, these prophets ceased not to proclaim the restoration of the Bourbons to be the sole purpose of the war. Let there be no talk of indemnities. Be content with crushing Jacobinism and restoring order. Such was their contention; and much may be said for it.

On the other hand, we must remember that at first England was not a principal in the contest. It was thrust upon her by the aggressions of the Jacobins, and perforce she played a subordinate part in continental campaigns, the prizes of which Austria and Prussia had already marked out. The reproaches hurled by Burke and Windham were the outcome of ignorance as to the aims of the powerful Allies, whose co-operation, illusory though it came to be, was at that time deemed essential to success. Further, in striking at the French colonies, Pitt followed the course successfully adopted by England in several wars. But here again his difficulties were greater than those of Chatham. Indeed, they were enhanced by the triumphs of Chatham. Where now could he deal the most telling blow? Not against Canada; for his father had reft that prize. The French settlements in the East Indies were of small account. It was in Hayti, Martinique, and Guadeloupe that French commerce could be ruined. At them, therefore, he struck. But in so doing he reopened the old disputes with Spain. In vain did he seek to avert bickerings by suggesting a friendly understanding about Hayti. Godoy was determined to bicker. And, as the war changed its character, the old Latin affinities helped that adventurer to undermine the monarchical league and to draw back Spain to the traditional connection with France.

The Spanish declaration of war in October 1796 opens the fourth phase of the struggle. Thenceforth England stood on the defensive in Europe in order to guard and strengthen her Colonial Empire. She abandoned Corsica and Elba; she withdrew her fleet from the Mediterranean so that Ireland might be screened from attack. Pitt's views also underwent a change.

Foreseeing the collapse of Austria, he sought to assure peace with France and Spain by conquering enough territory oversea to counterbalance the triumphs of Bonaparte and Moreau in Italy and the Rhineland. If he could not restore the Balance of Power on the Continent, he strove to safeguard British interests at all essential points. Failing to save Holland from the Jacobins' grip, he conquered and held the Cape. This was the bent of his policy during the peace overtures of the year 1796. He struggled on reluctantly with the war, opposing as inopportune the motions of Fox, Grey, or Wilberforce for peace, but ever hoping that France would be compelled by the pressure of bankruptcy to come to terms and surrender some of her continental conquests on consideration of recovering her colonies. Wilberforce heard him declare that he could almost calculate the time when her resources would be exhausted. On the philanthropist repeating this at a dinner party, one of his guests, de Lageard, wittily remarked: "I should like to know who was Chancellor of the Exchequer to Attila."[1] This remark shore asunder Pitt's financial arguments and reveals the weak point of his policy. He conducted the war as if it were a Seven Years' War. It was a Revolutionary War; and at this very time a greater than Attila was at hand. Bonaparte was preparing to use the spoils of Italy for the extension of the arena of strife. Nelson, then seeking to intercept the supplies of Bonaparte's army in the Riviera, foresaw the danger and thus graphically summarized it: "Italy is the gold mine; and if once entered, is without means of resistance." As by a flash we see in this remark and in that of de Lageard the miscalculation which was to ruin the life work of Pitt and almost ruin his country.

Despite the opposition of the King and Grenville to the negotiations for peace, Pitt held firm; and early in 1796 advances were made through Wickham, our enterprising envoy in Switzerland. They were foredoomed to failure; on 26th March the Directory declared its resolve to listen to no proposals involving the surrender of any of the lands incorporated in France by the terms of the constitution of 1795. This implied that she would retain the Rhine boundary, along with Savoy, Nice, and Avignon. Grenville received the news with satisfaction, remarking to Wickham that the Directory had acted clumsily and "in fact played our game better than we could have hoped."[1] The effect on public opinion was even better when it appeared that France expected England to surrender her colonial conquests. That France should gain enormously on land while the British acquisitions oversea were surrendered, was so monstrous a claim as to arouse the temper of the nation. Even Fox admitted that if France retained her conquests in Europe, England must keep those gained at sea. As Pitt pointed out in his speech of 10th May 1796, the French demands blighted all hope of peace; and we must struggle on, "waiting for the return of reason in our deluded enemy."

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," ii, 92.

Pitt regarded the French conquest of Italy as counterbalanced by the triumph of Jervis and Nelson at Cape St. Vincent in February 1797; and he therefore refused to consider the cession of Gibraltar to Spain. Wholeheartedly he sought for peace in that year. But it was to be peace with honour. In fact, Great Britain fared better after 1796 than before. As Allies fell away or joined the enemy, her real strength began to appear. The reasons for the paradox are not far to seek. Open enemies are less dangerous than false friends. Further, the complexities of the war, resulting from the conflicting aims of the Allies, vanished. England therefore could act in the way in which Pitt would all along have preferred her to act, namely, against the enemy's colonies. In Europe her attitude was defensive; and for a time in the summer and autumn of 1796 fears of invasion were rife. Accordingly the Quarter-Master-General, Sir David Dundas, drew up a scheme of coast defence, especially for the district between Pegwell Bay and Pevensey Bay; he also devised measures for "driving" the country in front of the enemy. In November of that year he recommended the construction of batteries or entrenchments at Shooter's Hill, Blackheath, on the hills near Lee, Lewisham, Sydenham, Norwood, Streatham, Merton, and Wandsworth. The failure of Hoche's attempt at Bantry Bay and the victory off Cape St. Vincent somewhat assuaged these fears; but, owing to the alarming state of Ireland, England remained on the defensive through the years 1797-8, until Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition enabled her to strike a crushing blow at the chief colonial enterprise of her antagonist. That adventure, together with the aggressions of France at Rome and in Switzerland, aroused the anger or fear of Russia, Austria, and Naples, and thereby led up to the war of the Second Coalition.

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[1] Sorel, v, 41; "Wickham Corresp.," i, 269-74, 343. Some mis-statements of Sorel may be noted here. On pp. 39, 40 of vol. v he states that Pitt was intent on acquiring Malta and Egypt (though he was then in doubt whether to retain Corsica): also that, after the insult to George III in London on 29th October 1795, Pitt proposed a loan of £18,000,000 and new taxes, which Parliament refused. The facts are that Pitt asked for that loan on 7th December 1796, and it was subscribed in twenty-two hours. On the same day Parliament voted the new taxes.

Amidst the conflict of aims which distracted the Allies in the First Coalition, Pitt's foresight was not seldom at fault. But only those who have weighed the importance of the diplomatic issues at stake, and have noted their warping influence on military affairs, have the right to accuse him of blindness and presumption. The problem before him was of unexampled complexity, and its solution could be effected only by a succession of experiments. That he put forth too many efforts at one time may be granted; and yet in each case, if the details are fully known, the reasons for making the attempt seem adequate. Did not Chatham fail in most of the expeditions which he sent against the coasts of France? Even those who censure Pitt for his blunders in the war will admit that the inspiring influence of his personality and patriotism nerved the nation and Parliament for the struggle. True, the Opposition indulged in petty nagging and in ingeniously unpatriotic tactics; but they only served to throw up in bold relief the consistent and courageous conduct of the Prime Minister. It was an easy task to refute the peevish efforts of Fox to justify the French Jacobins alike before the war, throughout its course, and in their rejection of the British overtures for peace. But in every encounter Pitt won more than a personal triumph. He proved that the war was forced upon us; that on our side it was a defensive effort; and that despite the perverse conduct of Prussia and Spain, England had won notable gains oversea and might expect an advantageous peace, provided only that the nation persevered.

One question remains. Why did not Pitt call the nation to arms? The reasons for his caution are doubtless to be found in the ingrained conservatism of the English character, and in the political ferment which marked the years 1794-5. The mere proposal to merge Line, Militia, and Volunteers in one national array would have seemed mere madness. For the populace had recently been protesting against the facilities given to the loyal to arm and drill themselves. It was rumoured that, by way of retort, the men of Sheffield, Southwark, and Norwich secretly mustered for practice with pikes. In such circumstances, conscription might well spell Revolution. Here was the weak place in Pitt's armour. By parting company with the reformers, he had embittered no small section of his countrymen. In 1794, as we have seen, he was considered a reactionary and an oppressor. He therefore could not appeal to the nation, as Carnot did in France. Even his Bill of March 1794 for increasing the Militia by an extension of the old custom of the ballot or the drawing of lots produced some discontent. A similar proposal, passed a year earlier by the Dublin Parliament for raising 16,000 additional Militiamen in Ireland, led to widespread rioting, especially in Ulster. Not until 1797 did the Scottish Militia Act ensure the adoption of similar methods by Scotland, though regiments of Fencibles were raised in the meantime.

The preparations for national defence continued to proceed in these parochial ways. Pitt's authority at Westminster was at no time more firmly founded than at the time of the meeting of the new Parliament in the autumn of 1796. Yet the piecemeal methods went on as before. He proposed to raise by means of the ballot a levy of 15,000 men in order to recruit the navy and the Line regiments; and he further asked for a levy of 60,000 men as a Supplementary Militia, one tenth being embodied by turns so as not to withdraw from work too many hands at one time. Nor was this all. For the purpose of strengthening the irregular cavalry, he proposed that every person who kept ten horses should be required to furnish one horseman and a horse for such a corps, and those who owned more than ten horses were to subscribe a proportionate sum towards its maintenance. He also required gamekeepers and those who took out licenses to shoot either to serve on horseback or to find a substitute. In all he expected to raise 20,000 horsemen by these means.

The attitude of the House was on the whole highly favourable to these proposals. Fox accused Ministers of raising an invasion scare in order to compass their own nefarious designs; but Pitt's first proposals passed without a division; that on the cavalry by 140 votes to 30. Nevertheless, Pitt did nothing towards securing cohesion in these diverse forces, except by a provision which obliged Volunteers to enrol in the Supplementary Militia, to take the oath as such, and to train by turns for twenty days at a time in any part of the country, instead of training once or twice a week in their own towns. This must have been beneficial where it was carried out; but, as the Militia was controlled by the Home Office, it is doubtful whether enough energy was thrown into the scheme to ensure success.

These arrangements are miserably inadequate in comparison with the *levée en masse* of Carnot, which baffled the calculations of foreign statesmen, flung back the armies of the Coalition, and opened up the path of glory for Bonaparte. Here the popular armament did not become in any sense national until after the renewal of war in 1803. The possibilities open to England, even in that trying year 1795, were set forth by Major Cartwright in a suggestive pamphlet—"The Commonwealth in Danger." After pointing out that, having been deserted by Prussia and Spain, we must now depend on ourselves alone, he depicted the contrast between England and France. The French Republic, relying on the populace, had more than a million of men under arms. Great Britain was "a disarmed, defenceless, unprepared people, scarcely more capable of resisting a torrent of French invaders than the herds and flocks of Smithfield." How, then, could the danger be averted? Solely (he replied) by trusting the people and by reviving the ancient laws which compelled householders to bear arms. But this implied the concession of the franchise. Be bold, he said. Make the Kingdom a Commonwealth and the nation will be saved. He continued in these noteworthy words: "The enemy is at the gates, and we must be friends or perish. Adversity is a school of the sublime virtues. Necessity is an eloquent reconciler of differences.... By saying to Britain—Be an armed nation, she secures her defence and seals her freedom. A million of armed men, supporting the State with their purse, and defending it with their lives, will know that none have so great a stake as themselves in the Government. . . . Arming the people and reforming Parliament are inseparable."

At first sight this seems mere rhetoric, but on reflection it will appear the path of prudence. By the talisman of trust in the people France conjured up those armed hosts which overthrew old Europe. At the stamp of Napoleon's heel a new Europe arose, wherein the most potent defiance came from the peoples which drew upon their inmost reserves of strength. That these consist in men, not in money, is clear from the course of the struggle against the great Emperor. Spain, Russia, and Prussia adopted truly national systems of defence, and quickly forged to the front. Britain and Austria clung to their old systems, and, thanks to Wellington's genius and Metternich's diplomacy, they survived. But they did not play the decisive part which they might have done if George III and Pitt, Francis II and Thugut, had early determined to trust and arm their peoples. Unfortunately for England, she underwent no military disaster; and therefore Pitt was fain to plod along in the old paths and use the nation's wealth, not its manhood. He organized it piecemeal, on a class basis, instead of embattling it as a whole. In the main his failure to realize the possibilities of the situation arose from his abandonment of those invigorating principles which nerved him to the achievements of the earlier and better part of his career. It is conceivable that, had he retained the idealism of his youth and discovered a British Scharnhorst, Waterloo might have been fought in 1796 and won solely by British troops.

CHAPTER XIII

DEARTH AND DISCONTENT

The Waste Land Bill will turn the tide of our affairs and enable us to bear without difficulty the increased burdens of the war.—SINCLAIR TO PITT, 13th March 1796.

ON 29th October 1795 occurred an event unparalleled within the memory of Englishmen then living. An immense crowd, filling the Mall, broke into loud hissing and hooting when George III left Buckingham House in the state carriage to proceed to Westminster for the opening of Parliament. The tumult reached its climax as the procession approached the Ordnance Office, when a small pebble, or marble, or shot from an air-gun, pierced the carriage window. The King immediately said to Westmorland, who sat opposite, "That 's a shot," and, with the courage of his family, coolly leaned forward to examine the round hole in the glass. Similar scenes occurred on his return to St. James's Palace. The mob pressed forward with an eagerness which the Guards could scarcely restrain, calling out "Peace, Peace; Bread, Bread; No Pitt; No Famine." With some difficulty the gates of the Horse Guards were shut against them. Opposite Spring Gardens a stone struck the woodwork of the carriage; and the intrepid monarch alighted at St. James's amidst a commotion so wild that one of the horses took fright and flung down a groom, breaking his thigh. Thereafter the rabble set upon the state carriage, greatly damaging it; and when George later on proceeded in his private carriage to Buckingham House, he again ploughed his way through a din of curses. Pitt kept discreetly in the background, or he would have been roughly handled.

A loyalist caricature of the period gives an imaginative version of the incident. In it Pitt figures as the coachman whipping on the horses of the royal carriage amidst a shower of stones, eggs, and cats. The King sits inside absolutely passive, with large protruding eyes; Lansdowne, Bedford, Whitbread, and others strive to stop the wheels; Fox and Sheridan, armed with bludgeons, seek to force open the door; while Norfolk fires a blunderbuss at the King. The sketch illustrates the fierce partisanship of the time, which stooped to incredibly coarse charges. But scarcely less strange was the insinuation of Lansdowne, immediately after the affair, that Ministers had themselves planned it in order to alarm the public and perpetuate their despotic rule. The same insinuation found favour with Francis Place, a rabid tailor of Holborn, and a prominent member of the London Corresponding Society, who charged Pitt with imperilling the life of George III in order to keep office. "It is a curious circumstance," he wrote, "that Pitt carried all his obnoxious measures, silenced or kept down his opponents and raised vast sums of money by means of the alarms which he and his coadjutors had created. The war was commenced after an alarm had been created, and it was kept up by the same means."[1] Fox and his followers often uttered similar taunts.

The insults to the King were but the climax of an agitation which had previously gone to strange lengths. On 27th October 1795 the London Corresponding Society convened a monster meeting in the fields near Copenhagen House, Islington, in order to protest against the war and to press for annual Parliaments and universal suffrage. A crowd said to number nearly 150,000 persons assembled under the chairmanship of John Binns, and passed an "Address to the Nation," which concluded as follows: "If ever the British nation should loudly demand strong and decisive measures, we boldly answer, 'We have lives and are ready to devote them either separately or collectively for the salvation of our country.'" Outwardly the meeting was orderly, if that epithet can be applied to a monster meeting which advocated civil war. But probably less than one tenth of the assemblage heard the resolution. Equally threatening was a hand-bill circulated in London on the practice of "King-killing." Place says nothing about this, and ridicules the "Address to the Nation" as a foolish production, which he had opposed no less strongly than the convocation of the meeting. This was the usual attitude of Place. He sought to figure as the apostle of reasonableness, deprecating all unwise acts and frothy talk on the part of his associates, but minimizing the follies of British democrats, which he usually ascribed to the insidious advice of the emissaries of Pitt.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 27808.

Let us enlarge our survey. From the Home Office Records it is clear that dear food and uncertain work had aggravated the political discontent of the years 1792-4, until the autumn of 1795 witnessed almost an epidemic of sedition. To take one significant episode. An inflammatory placard, dated Norwich, 16th October 1795, was widely circulated. That city, as we have seen, was a hotbed of Radicalism. There it was that the democratic clubs sought to federate with the view of forming a National Convention. One of their members, named Besey, now posted up the following placard. After stating that the prevailing misery is due to the present unjust and unnecessary war, the number of abuses and sinecures, and "the monopoly of farms which disgraces this country," it continues thus: "The Minister would gladly instigate you to riot and plunder that he might send against you those *valiant* heroes who compose his devoted Volunteer corps. . . . This would accelerate his darling object of governing us by a military aristocracy. The countries which supplied us with quantities of corn now groan under the iron yoke of the Tigress of the North or lie desolate from this infernal war. We send immense stores to the emigrants and the *Chouans*. Those rebels, not satisfied with traitorously resisting the constituted authorities of their country, have desolated the face of it. These honourable Allies must be fed, as others of the kind are paid, by us." He then urges them to form popular Societies and demand redress of grievances. He concludes thus: "You may as well look for chastity and mercy in the Empress of Russia, honour and consistency from the King of Prussia, wisdom and plain dealing from the Emperor of Germany, as a single speck of virtue from our **Hell-born Minister.**"[1]

In view of these facts, is it surprising that Ministers decided to issue a royal proclamation against seditious assemblies and the circulation of treasonable papers? Sheriffs, magistrates, and all law-abiding men were charged to apprehend those who distributed such papers and to help in the suppression of seditious meetings (4th November). Six days later Grenville introduced the Treasonable Practices Bill, while Pitt in the Commons moved the Seditious Meetings Bill. The Prime Minister stated that, as soon as the Habeas Corpus Act came again into operation, the political clubs renewed their propaganda and brought about the present dangerous situation. In order to suppress gatherings of a definitely seditious character, he proposed that, before a meeting of more than fifty persons which was not convened by the local authorities, notice must be given by seven householders and sent to the magistrates. The Bill also required the presence of a magistrate, and invested him with power to stop any speech, disperse the meeting, and order the arrest of the speaker. But this was not all. The authorities had been alarmed by the popularity of Thelwall's racy discourses, resumed early in 1795, which represented Government as the source of all the country's ills. Whether his sprightly sallies were dangerous may be doubted; but Pitt, with characteristic lack of humour, paid Thelwall the compliment of ordaining that lecture-halls must be licensed by two magistrates; and a magistrate might enter at any time. The Bill was passed for three years.

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 36.

Equally drastic was the Treasonable Practices Bill. Declaring the planning or levying war within the kingdom to be an act of substantive treason, it imposed dire penalties on those who devised evil against the King, who sought to coerce Parliament or help the invaders. Even those who spoke or wrote against the constitution came under the penalties for treason and might be transported for seven years. As Fox indignantly exclaimed, if he criticized a system which allotted two members to Old Sarum and none to Manchester, he might be sent to Botany Bay. The alarm of Pitt at the state of affairs appears in a request which he and Portland sent to the Duke of York, on 14th November, for reinforcements of cavalry. They asked him to despatch three troops of the 1st Dragoon Guards from Romford to Hackney, replacing the Pembroke Fencible Cavalry, which was utterly useless; to order up two troops of the Cornish Fencible Cavalry from Barnet to Hampstead and Highgate; to despatch the 11th Light Dragoons from Guildford to Ewell or Kingston, and the 1st Fencibles from Reading to Uxbridge. These, along with the Lancashire Militia at Lewisham and Greenwich, and the Guards in London, would suffice for the crisis.[1]

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[1] "H. O.," (Departmental), Secs. of State.

Such were the conditions under which the debates on the two Bills proceeded. They turned largely on the connection between the Islington meeting and the outrage on the King. Canning stoutly affirmed that connection, which Sheridan and Fox no less vehemently denied. Wilberforce on this occasion supported the Government. Pitt showed little zeal in defending his Bill, promising to safeguard the right of public meeting when lawfully exercised. The debate in the Lords elicited from the Bishop of Rochester the significant statement that he did not know what the great mass of the people had to do with the laws except to obey them. The Earl of Lauderdale pilloried this utterance, thereby consoling himself for being in a minority of 5. In the Commons Fox mustered 22, as against 167 for the Government (6th November—14th December 1795). Meanwhile monster meetings of protest were held on 12th November and 2nd and 7th December, the two last in Marylebone Fields, which now form the greater portion of Regent's Park. The orderliness of these vast throngs, comprising perhaps a quarter of a million of men, affords a strong argument against the two Acts. Lord Malmesbury much regretted that there was no rioting, now that all was ready for its repression. After the passing of those "barbarous bloodthirsty" measures (as Place called them) the country settled down into a sullen silence. Reformers limited their assemblies to forty-five members; but even so they did not escape the close meshes of the law. Binns and Jones delegates of the London Corresponding Society who went to Birmingham, were arrested there; and the Society soon gave up its propaganda. All but the most resolute members fell away, and by the end of 1796 it was £185 in debt.[1]

Undoubtedly these measures mark the nadir of Pitt's political career. Nevertheless, the coincidence between the London Corresponding Society's meeting at Islington and the attempted outrage on George III was suspiciously close in point of time; and a dangerous feeling prevailed throughout the country. Pitt, as we shall see, took steps to alleviate the distress which was its chief cause; but after the insult to the King he could not but take precautionary measures against sedition. After such an incident, a Minister who did nothing at all would be held responsible if the monarch were assassinated. Some coercive measures were inevitable; and it is clear that they cowed the more restive spirits. Among other persons who wrote to Pitt on this topic, Wilson formerly his tutor at Burton Pynsent and Cambridge, sent him a letter from Binfield, in which occur these sentences: "The Sedition Bills also have had so good an effect. Our farmers can now go to market without being exposed to the danger of having republican principles instilled into them while they are dining." Apparently, then, the loyal efforts of Berkshire magistrates extended to the interiors of inns. Whether the two Acts were not needlessly prolonged is open to grave question. Certainly, while driving the discontent underground, they increased its explosive force. General David Dundas, in his Report on National Defence of November 1796, states that at no time were there so many people disposed to help the invaders. Perhaps we may sum up by declaring the two Acts a disagreeable but necessary expedient during the time of alarm, and mischievous when it passed away.[1]

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[1] B M. Add. MSS., 27808; "Hist. of the Two Acts," 330 *et seq.*

The insult to the King was but one symptom of a distemper widely prevalent. Its causes were manifold. Chief among them was a feeling of disgust at the many failures of the war. The defection of Prussia and Spain, the fruitless waste of British troops in the West Indies, the insane follies of the French *émigrés*, the ghastly scenes at Quiberon, and the tragi-comedy of Vendémiaire in the streets of Paris, sufficed to daunt the stoutest hearts. By the middle of the month of October 1795, Pitt decided to come to terms with France, if the Directory newly installed in power, should found a stable Government and exhibit peaceful tendencies. His position in this autumn is pathetic. Reproached by the *émigrés* for recalling the Comte d'Artois from Yeu, taunted by Fox for not having sought peace from the Terrorists, and reviled by the populace as the cause of the dearth, he held firmly on his way, shelving the *émigrés*, maintaining that this was the first opportunity of gaining a lasting peace, and adjuring the people to behave manfully in order the more speedily to win it.

This advice seemed but cold comfort to men and women whose hardships were severe. Political discontent was greatly increased by dear food and uncertainty of employment. The symptoms had long been threatening. At midsummer of the year 1795 the men of Birmingham assembled in hundreds opposite a mill and bakehouse on Snow Hill, crying out: "A large loaf. Are we to be starved to death?" They were dispersed by armed force, but not without bloodshed. At that time insubordination in the troops was met by summary executions or repression at Horsham, Brighton, and Dumfries. In July a drunken brawl at Charing Cross led to a riot, in the course of which the mob smashed Pitt's windows in Downing Street, and demolished a recruiting station in St. George's Fields, Lambeth. The country districts were deeply agitated by the shortage of corn resulting from the bad harvest of 1794. A report from Beaminster in Dorset stated that for six weeks before the harvest of 1795 no wheat remained; and the poor of that county would have starved, had not a sum of money been raised sufficient to buy cargoes of wheat which then reached Plymouth.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 190; "W. O., 113

The suffering was increased by the extraordinary cold of that midsummer which destroyed hundreds of newly-shorn sheep and blighted the corn. Driving storms of rain in August laid the crops. On heavy land they were utterly spoilt, so that even by October the poor felt the pinch. From all parts there came the gloomiest reports. In Oxfordshire there was no old wheat left, and the insatiable demands from the large towns of the north sent up prices alarmingly. In November Lord Bateman wrote from Leominster that the wheat crop was but two thirds of the average, and, if Government did not import wheat directly, not through fraudulent contractors, riots must ensue. Reports from Petworth, East Grinstead, and Battle told of the havoc wrought by blight and rains. At Plymouth the price of wheat exceeded all records. Lord Salisbury reported a shortage of one third in the wheat crop of mid-Hertfordshire. Kensington sent a better estimate for its corn lands. But the magistrates of Enfield and Edmonton deemed the outlook so threatening that they urged Pitt and his colleagues (1) to encourage the free importation of wheat, (2) to facilitate the enclosure of all common fields and the conversion of common and waste lands into tillage; (3) to pass an Act legalizing relief of the poor in every parish by the weekly distribution of bread and meat at reduced prices in proportion to the size of the family and of its earnings.[1]

The protests against the Corn Laws are significant. In 1773 the bounty system of the reign of William III was revised, the average price of wheat being reckoned at forty-four shillings the quarter. If it fell below that figure, a bounty of five shillings a quarter was granted on export, so as to encourage farmers to give a wide acreage to wheat, in the assurance that in bountiful seasons they could profitably dispose of their surplus. But when the price rose to forty-four shillings exportation was forbidden, and at forty-eight shillings foreign corn was admitted on easy terms so as to safeguard the consumer; for, as Burke said: "he who separates the interest of the consumer from the interest of the grower starves the country." Unfortunately, in 1791, Government raised the price at which importation was allowed to fifty-four shillings the quarter, subject to a proviso that the King in Council might lower the limit in time of dearth. The upward trend of prices may have called for some change; but it was too drastic. In view of the increase of the manufacturing townships, Pitt should have favoured the import of foreign corn, though not in such a way as unduly to discourage agriculturists. England, in fact, was then reaching the stage at which she needed foreign corn when nature withheld her bounties at home, and it is well to remember that 1792 was the last year in which England exported any appreciable amount of wheat. During the Great War she became an importing country, and at no time was the crisis worse than in the winter of 1795-6. Early in the year 1796 the best wheat sold at six guineas the quarter, or four times its present price; the inferior kinds were very dear, and many poor people perished from want if not from actual starvation. So grave was the crisis as to evoke a widespread demand for Free Trade in corn. This feeling pervaded even the rural districts, a report by John Shepherd of Faversham being specially significant. In the towns there was an outcry against corn merchants, who were guilty of forestalling and regrating. Possibly but for these tricks of trade the supply of home wheat might almost have sufficed.

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[1] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 36.

Pitt seems to have thought so; for he wrote to the Marquis of Stafford, stating his desire to have powers for compelling exhaustive returns of the wheat supply to be sent in. On the whole, however, he deemed such an expedient high-handed and likely to cause alarm. He therefore decided to call for a special committee to inquire into the high price of corn, and explained his reasons to the House of Commons on 3rd November 1795. He urged the need of modifying the old and nearly obsolete law relating to the assize of bread, and he suggested the advisability of mixing wheat with barley, or other corn, which, while lessening the price of bread, would not render it unpalatable. As to prohibiting the distillation of whiskey, he proposed to discontinue that device after February 1796, so that the revenue might not unduly suffer. The committee was equally cautious. In presenting its report eight days later, Ryder moved that the members should pledge themselves to lessen the consumption of wheat in their households by one third. These proposals appeared wholly inadequate to Bankes and Sheridan, who urged that all classes should be compelled to eat the same kind of bread. Francis, however, asserted that the poor in his district now refused to eat any but the best wheaten bread. There was therefore every need for a law compelling bakers to make bread only two thirds of wheat. Nevertheless, the House agreed to the proposals of the committee. Members also bound themselves to forswear pastry, and by all possible means to endeavour to lessen the consumption of fine wheaten flour. History does not record how far these resolves held good, and with what hygienic results. An external sign of the patriotic mania for economy in wheat was the disuse of hair-powder, which resulted from the tax now imposed on that article. Thus Rousseau, Pitt, and Nature are largely responsible for a change which in its turn hastened the disappearance of wigs.

Pitt and his colleagues sought to check the practice of forestalling. But, as usually happens in a struggle with human selfishness, success was doubtful. More fruitful was the expedient of attracting foreign corn by granting large bounties on imports. As if this were not enough, British warships sometimes compelled neutral corn-vessels, bound for France, to put in at our harbours and sell their cargoes at the high prices then prevailing, a high-handed practice which prepared the way for the Armed Neutrality League of 1800. These exceptional expedients seem to have been due to what Sheffield called "a sure little junto,"—Pitt, Ryder, and Jenkinson. He further accused them of taking the corn trade out of the hands of the merchants and then dropping State management prematurely. Over against this captious comment may be placed the undoubted fact that, early in the year 1796, wheat sold at six guineas the quarter, and by the month of May was down nearly to normal prices. In that month Pitt deemed the crisis past; for the King's Speech of 19th May, at the end of the last session of that Parliament, congratulated members on the success of their efforts to afford relief to the people. The harvest of 1796 was more abundant; but confidence was not restored until late in the year. As Whitbread pointed out, the increase of large farms at the expense of the little men led to the holding back of the new corn. The small farmer perforce had to sell his corn at once. The wealthy farmer could bide his time.[1]

In these years of dearth, when the troubles in Poland restricted the supply of corn from that natural granary, the importance of the United States became increasingly obvious. Pitt had consistently sought to improve the relations with our kinsmen, and in 1791 sent out the first official envoy, George Hammond. The disputes resulting from the War of Independence and those arising out of the British Maritime Code during the Great War, brought about acute friction; but the good sense of Pitt, Washington, and John Jay, his special envoy to London, led to the conclusion of an Anglo-American Treaty (7th October 1794). Though hotly opposed by the Gallophil party at Washington, it was finally ratified in September 1796, and thus postponed for sixteen years the hostilities which had at times seemed imminent. For the present the United States sent us an increased quantity of cotton wool, but mere driblets of corn except in seasons of scarcity. Lancashire benefited from the enhanced trade, while the British farmer did not yet discern the approach of times of ruinous competition.[2]

Agriculture had long been an occupation equally fashionable and profitable. No part of the career of George III deserves more commendation than his patronage of high farming. That he felt keen interest in the subject appears from the letters which he sent to "The Annals of Agriculture" over the signature of "Ralph Robinson," one of his shepherds at Windsor. A present of a ram from the King's fine flock of merinos was a sign of high favour. Thanks to this encouragement and the efforts of that prince of agricultural reformers, Arthur Young, the staple industry of the land was in a highly flourishing condition. The rise in the price of wheat now stimulated the demand for the enclosure of waste lands and of the open or common-fields which then adjoined the great majority of English villages. The reclamation of wastes and fens was an advantage to all but the very poor, who, as graziers, wood-cutters, or fishermen, dragged along a life of poverty but independence. Though they might suffer by the change to tillage, the parish and the nation at large reaped golden harvests.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxxii, 235-42, 687-700, 1156; Tooke, "Hist. of Prices," i, 185 *et seq.*; Porter, "Progress of the Nation," 147, 452.

[2] "Dropmore P.," iii, 87, 243, 526-30; "Report of the American Hist. Assoc." (1903), ii, 67-9, 354, 375, 440 *et seq.*, 552-8; E. Channing, "United States," 148-50; Cunningham, 512, 694.

The enclosure of common fields was a different matter. Though on them the traditional rotation of crops was stupid and the husbandry slipshod, yet the semi-communal tillage of the three open strips enabled Hodge to jog along in the easy ways dear to him. In such cases a change to more costly methods involves hardship to the poor, who cannot, or will not, adopt the requirements of a more scientific age. Recent research has also shown that villagers depended mainly on their grazing rights. Now, a small grazier does not readily become a corn-grower. Even if he can buy a plough and a team, he lacks the experience needful for success in corn-growing. Accordingly, the small yeomen could neither compete with the large farmers nor imitate their methods. While the few who succeeded became prosperous, the many sank into poverty. These results may also be ascribed to the expense and injustice too often attending the enclosures of this period. Far from striking off at one blow the fetters of the old system, as happened in France in 1789, English law required each parish to procure its own Enclosure Act. Thus, when the parishioners at the village meeting had decided to enclose the common fields and waste, there occurred a long and costly delay until the parochial charter was gained.

Then again, the difficult task of re-allotting the wastes and open fields in proportion to the rights of the lord of the manor the tithe-owner, and the parishioners, sometimes furnished an occasion for downright robbery of the poor. That staunch champion of high-farming and enclosures, Arthur Young, names many instances of shameful extortion on the part of landlord and attorneys. Where the village carried out its enclosure fairly and cheaply, the benefits were undoubtedly great. The wastes then became good pasture or tolerable tillage; and the common fields, previously cut up into small plots, and worked on a wasteful rotation, soon testified to the magic of individual ownership. A case in point was Snettisham, near Sandringham, where, as the result of the new wealth, the population increased by one fifth, while the poor-rate diminished by one half. Young also declared that large parts of Norfolk, owing to judicious enclosures, produced glorious crops of grain and healthy flocks fed on turnips and mangolds, where formerly there had been dreary wastes, miserable stock, and underfed shepherds.

The dearth of the year 1795 brought to the front the question of a General Enclosure Act, for enabling parishes to adopt this reform without the expense of separately applying to Parliament. To devise a measure suitable to the wide diversities of tenure prevalent in English villages was a difficult task; but it had been carried out successfully in Scotland by the Act of 1695; and now, a century later, a similar boon was proposed for England by one of the most enterprising of Scotsmen. Sir John Sinclair was born in 1754 at Thurso Castle. Inheriting large estates in the county of Caithness, he determined to enter political life, and became member for Lostwithiel, in Cornwall. Differing sharply from Pitt over the Warren Hastings affair, he adopted the independent line of conduct natural to his tastes, and during the Regency dispute joined the intermediate party known as the Armed Neutrality.

Above all he devoted himself to the development of Scottish agriculture, and began in 1790 a work entitled "A Statistical Account of Scotland." He also founded a society for improving the quality of British wool, and in May 1793 he urged the Prime Minister to incorporate a Board of Agriculture. Young bet that Pitt would refuse; for, while favouring commerce and manufactures, he had hitherto done nothing for the plough. He lost his bet. Pitt gave a conditional offer of support, provided that the House of Commons approved. The proposal won general assent, despite the insinuations of Fox and Sheridan that its purpose was merely to increase the patronage at the disposal of the Cabinet. Sinclair became president, with Young as secretary.[1] The Englishman complained that Sinclair's habit of playing with large schemes wasted the scanty funds at their disposal. But the Board did good work, for instance, in setting on foot experiments as to the admixture of barley, beans, and rice in the partly wheaten bread ordained by Parliament in 1795.

With the view of framing a General Enclosure Act, Sinclair sought to extract from parochial Enclosure Acts a medicine suitable to the myriad needs and ailments of English rural life. His survey of typical enactments is of high interest. He summarizes the treatment accorded to the lord of the manor, the rector or other tithe owner, and the parishioners. Thus, in the case of three parishes near Hull, namely, Hessle, Anlaby, and Tranley, the wastes and open fields, comprising 3,640 acres, were divided by an act of the year 1792 in a way which seems to have given satisfaction. Commissioners appointed by the local authorities divided the soil among the lords of the manors, the tithe-owners, and the parishioners, the landlords retaining half of their portions in trust for the poor. Other instances, however, reveal the difficulty of the question of tithes. Young and Sinclair felt bitterly on this subject, as their recent proposal to give a detailed description of the lands of every parish in England was successfully opposed by Dr. Moore, Archbishop of Canterbury.

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[1] "Mems. of Sir John Sinclair," I, ch. iv; II, ch. i.

Pointing out the need of a General Enclosure Act, Sinclair claimed that of the 22,107,000 acres of waste in England and Wales, a large portion could be afforested, while only one million acres were quite useless—a very hopeful estimate.[1] In order to investigate this question, a Select Committee was appointed, comprising among others Lord William Russell, Ryder, Carew, Coke of Norfolk, Plumer, and Whitbread. The outcome of its research was the General Enclosure Bill introduced early in the session of 1796, which elicited the sanguine prophecy of its author quoted at the head of this chapter.

The measure aroused keen interest. On 15th March the London Court of Aldermen urged its members to assist in passing some such measure with a view to increasing the food supply, and providing work for the poor, as well as for soldiers and sailors discharged at the peace. The proposals were as follows: The present method of enclosure would be extended so as to enable the parties concerned to frame an inexpensive and friendly agreement. In case of disagreement the Bill would enable the majority of the parishioners, voting, not by head, but according to the value of their rights, to decide on the question of enclosure. But, in order to safeguard the rights of the poor, the choice of commissioners charged with the duty of re-allotting the soil would rest with the majority, reckoned both according to heads and value. The lord of the manor could not veto enclosure; but his convenience was specially to be consulted in the re-apportionment of the land. Sinclair also pointed out to Pitt that, as tithe-owners were now "much run at," their interests must be carefully guarded. As for the cottagers, they would find compensation for the lapse of their fuel rights by the acquisition of small allotments near to their cottages. The poor also would not be charged with the expenses of enclosure, and might raise money on loan to fence the plots awarded to them in lieu of their share in the waste and the open fields. To insist, said Sinclair, on four acres being annexed to every cottage was really harmful. Finally he expressed the hope that, under his plan, the legal expenses of enclosure would on an average be £5 per parish as against the present burden of £500.[1]

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[1] "Mems. of Sir John Sinclair," ii, 60-4, 104; Sinclair, "Address . . . on the Cultivation of Waste Lands (1795)"; "Observations on . . . a Bill for facilitating the Division of Commons." He first urged this on Pitt on 10th January 1795 (Pitt MSS., 175).

Pitt's treatment of the General Enclosure Bill is somewhat obscure. Again and again Sinclair urged him to greater activity. In April 1796 he begged him to consult with the judges so as to meet the objections of tithe-owners. In May he warned him of the general disappointment that must ensue if no measure of that kind passed in that session. He asked him whether the Bill, as now amended by the committee, would not answer its purpose. Pitt gave no encouraging sign. On the contrary, he gratified the country gentlemen by opposing a Bill for the Reform of the Game Laws. The proposer, Curwen, sought merely to legalize the killing of game started on ground farmed by the occupier. But the squires took alarm, asserting that every small farmer could then pursue hares and rabbits from his ground into their preserves, and that country life, on those terms, would be intolerable. Pitt took their side, averring that sport was a relaxation well suited to the higher Orders of State, but likely to entice farmers away "from more serious and useful occupations." Much may be forgiven to a Prime Minister shortly before a General Election, which, in fact, gave to Pitt a new lease of power.

To Sinclair the election brought defeat and chagrin. He travelled northward to the Orkneys to seek a seat there, and, writing from Edinburgh on 6th July, tartly informed Pitt of his rejection after a journey of nearly a thousand miles. He must (he adds) either obtain a seat elsewhere, or take no further interest in the Board of Agriculture. If Pitt approves of his labour at the Board, will he show it in some way? "If, on the other hand," he continues, "you feel the least hesitation about giving it support, your candour, I am persuaded, will induce you to inform me at once, that I may no longer be tempted to waste so much time and labour in such pursuits. . . . I still flatter myself, however, that you will see the object in such a light that you will give the President of the Board of Agriculture a seat either in the Upper or the Lower House, that he may be encouraged to carry on the concerns of that useful institution with redoubled energy." Pitt's comment on the back of the letter is suggestive: "That he has lost his election, but flatters himself that a seat will be given him either in the *Lower* or Upper House, or he must decline taking further concern in the proceedings of the Board of Agriculture." A little later Sinclair renewed his appeal for a seat either at Midhurst, or in Scotland. Failing that, he hinted that the President of the Board of Agriculture ought to be a Peer. Is it surprising that Pitt fulfilled the suggestion by giving his influence in favour of Lord Somerville, who displaced Sinclair at the Board in 1798? Loughborough it was who suggested the change;[1] but Pitt must have approved it; and thereafter the Board deteriorated.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 178.

In truth the thane of Thurso had become a bore. His letters to Pitt teem with advice on foreign politics and the distillation of whisky, on new taxes and high farming, on increasing the silver coinage and checking smuggling, on manning the navy and raising corps of Fencibles. Wisdom flashing forth in these diverse forms begets distrust. Sinclair the omniscient correspondent injured Sinclair the agrarian reformer. Young treated the Prime Minister with more tact. His letters were fewer, and his help was practical. A pleasing instance of this was his presence at Holwood in April 1798, when Pitt was draining the hillside near his house, so as to preserve it from damp and provide water for the farm and garden below. Young drew up the scheme, went down more than once to superintend the boring and trenching, and then added these words: "I beg you will permit me to give such attention merely and solely as a mark of gratitude for the goodness I have already experienced at your hands."[2]

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[1] "Corresp. of Sir John Sinclair," i, 124.

[2] Pitt MSS., 193. Sinclair raised two corps of Fencibles. The list of his works, pamphlets, etc., fills thirty-two pages at the end of his Memoirs.

Sinclair, now member for Petersfield, brought his General Enclosure Bill before Parliament in 1797. In order to meet the objections of tithe-owners and lawyers, he divided it into two parts, the former applying to parishes where all the persons concerned were unanimous, the latter where this was not the case. Even so the measure met with opposition from the legal profession; and on 13th May he wrote to Pitt expressing deep concern at the opposition of the Solicitor-General. In July he besought Pitt to make the Bill a Cabinet measure in order to "prevent either legal or ecclesiastical prejudices operating against it." Nevertheless Pitt remained neutral, and the Bill was lost in the Lords, mainly owing to the opposition of the Lord Chancellor.[1] In December Sinclair announced his intention of bringing in a Bill for the improvement of waste land; but, he added significantly, "I should be glad previously to know whether it is your intention to support that measure or not." Pitt gave no sign, and the proposal did not come forward.

Pitt's treatment of one of the most important questions of that time deserves censure. We may grant that the fussiness of Sinclair told against his proposals. It is also true that the drafting of a Bill applicable to every English parish was beset with difficulties, and that enclosures, while adding greatly to the food supply of the nation, had for the most part told against the independence of the poorer villagers. But this was largely due to the expense and chicanery consequent on the passing of parochial Acts of Parliament; and what objections were there to facilitating the enclosure of wastes and open fields by parishes where everyone desired it? In such a case it was the bounden duty of Parliament to end the law's delays and cheapen the procedure.

That Pitt did little or nothing to avert the hostility of bishops and lawyers in the Upper House convicts him either of apathy or of covert opposition. He is largely responsible for the continuance of the old customs, under which a parish faced the expense of procuring a separate Act of Parliament only under stress of severe dearth; and, as a rule, the crisis ended long before the cumbrous machinery of the law enabled the new lands to come under the plough. It is, however, possible that he hoped to inaugurate a system of enclosures of waste lands by a clause which appeared in his abortive proposals of the year 1797 for the relief of the poor. His Bill on that subject comprised not only very generous plans of relief, but also the grant of cows to the deserving poor, the erection of Schools of Industry in every parish or group of parishes, and facilities for reclaiming waste land. His treatment of the question of poor relief is too extensive a subject to admit of adequate description here; but I propose to return to it and to notice somewhat fully the criticisms of Bentham and others.[1] It must suffice to say that the draft of that measure bespeaks a keen interest in the welfare of the poor, and indeed errs on the side of generosity. Abbot, afterwards Lord Colchester, was asked by Pitt to help in drafting the Poor Bill; and he pronounced it "as bad in the mode as the principles were good in substance."[2]

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[1] "Mems. of Sir John Sinclair," ii, 106-9.

After the withdrawal of Pitt's Poor Bill, nothing was done to facilitate enclosures until the accession of Addington to power. His General Enclosure Act of the year 1801 afforded timely relief in the matter of food-supply, a fact which shows that the difficulties in the way of such a measure were far from serious. The passing of that Bill, it is true, was helped on by the terrible dearth of that year, when the average price of wheat was close on 116 shillings the quarter. But Pitt was content to meet the almost equally acute crisis of 1795-6 by temporary shifts, one of which exasperated the neutral States of the North and prepared the way for the renewal of the hostile League of the Baltic.

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[1] "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters."

[2] "Lord Colchester's Diary," i, 82.

CHAPTER XIV

THE YEARS OF STRAIN (1796-7)

Torn as we are by faction, without an army, without money, trusting entirely to a navy whom we may not be able to pay, and on whose loyalty, even if we can, no firm reliance is to be placed, how are we to get out of this cursed war without a Revolution?—CORNWALLIS TO ROSS, 15th December 1797.

THE year 1797, which opened with events portending the overthrow of Austria and the financial collapse of England, brought a passing gleam of sunshine into the gray life of Pitt. For some time he had been a frequent visitor at Eden Farm, Beckenham, the seat of Lord Auckland. It was on the way to Holwood, and the cheerful society of that large family afforded a relief from cares of state not to be found in his bachelor household. His circle of friends, never large, had somewhat diminished with the wear and tear of politics. His affection for Wilberforce, perhaps, had not quite regained its former fervour. As for the vinous society of Dundas, a valuable colleague but a far from ideal companion, Pitt must in his better moments have held it cheap. He rarely saw his mother, far away in Somerset; and probably his relations to his brother had cooled since he removed him from the Admiralty. In truth, despite his loving disposition, Pitt was a lonely man.

The voice of rumour, in his case always unfair, charged him with utter indifference to feminine charms. His niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, who later on had opportunities of observing him closely, vehemently denied the charge, declaring that he was much impressed by beauty in women, and noted the least defect, whether of feature, demeanour, or dress. She declared that, on one occasion, while commending her preparations for the ball-room, he suggested the looping up of one particular fold. At once she recognized the voice of the expert and hailed the experiment as an artistic triumph. Hester's recollections, it is true, belong to the lonely years spent in the Lebanon, when she indulged in ecstatic or spiteful outbursts; and we therefore question her statement that Pitt was once so enamoured of a certain Miss W——, who became Mrs. B——s of Devonshire, as to drink wine out of her shoe. But Hester's remarks are detailed enough to refute the reports of his unnatural insensibility, which elicited coarse jests from opponents; and we may fully trust that severe critic of all Pitt's friends, when, recalling a special visit to Beckenham Church, she pronounced the Honourable Eleanor Eden gloriously beautiful.[1]

To this bright vivacious girl of twenty years Pitt's affections went forth in the winter of 1796-7;[2] and she reciprocated them. Every one agrees that Eleanor combined beauty with good sense, sprightliness with tact. Having had varied experiences during Auckland's missions to Paris, Madrid, and The Hague, she had matured far beyond her years. In mental endowments she would have been a fit companion even to Pitt; and she possessed a rich store of the social graces in which he was somewhat deficient. In fact, here was his weak point as a political leader. He and his colleagues had no *salon* which could vie with those of the Whig grandees. The accession of Portland had been a social boon; but Pitt and his intimate followers exerted little influence on London Society. He and Grenville were too stiff. Neither Dundas nor Wilberforce moved in the highest circles. Portland, Spencer, and Windham held somewhat aloof, and Leeds, Sydney, and others had been alienated. Accordingly, the news that Pitt was paying marked attentions to Auckland's eldest daughter caused a flutter of excitement. Her charm and tact warranted the belief that in the near future the Prime Minister would dominate the social sphere hardly less than the political.

Among his friends who knew how warm a heart beat under that cold exterior, the news inspired the hope that here was the talisman which would reveal the hidden treasures of his nature. The stiff form would now unbend; the political leader would figure as a genial host; the martinet would become a man. Assuredly their estimate was correct. Pitt's nature needed more glow, wider sympathies, a freer expression. A happy marriage would in any case have widened his outlook and matured his character. But a union with Eleanor Eden would have supplied to him the amenities of life. We picture her exerting upon him an influence not unlike that which Wordsworth believed that his sister had exerted upon his being:

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[1] "Mems. of Lady Hester Stanhope," i, 177-81. Tomline asserted that a lady of the highest rank desired to marry Pitt. Various conjectures have been made on this topic. Lord Rosebery suggests that the Duchess of Gordon was hinted at.

[2] "Auckland Journals," iii, 356, 363, 369, 373-4.

> thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
> Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
> And teach the little birds to build their nests
> And warble in its chambers.[1]

It was not to be. After toying with this day-dream, Pitt suddenly broke away to Downing Street. His letter to Auckland, written there on 20th January 1797, announced the decision of the Minister in chillingly correct terms. In pathetically halting and laboured phraseology he implied that he had throughout observed a correct aloofness. After five long sentences of apology to the father he proceeded thus:

> Whoever may have the good fortune ever to be united to her is destined to more than his share of human happiness. Whether, at any rate, I could have had any ground to hope that such would have been my lot, I am in no degree entitled to guess. I have to reproach myself for ever having indulged the idea on my own part as far as I have done, without asking myself carefully and early enough what were the difficulties in the way of its being realised. I have suffered myself to overlook them too long, but having now at length reflected as fully and as calmly as I am able on every circumstance that ought to come under my consideration (at least as much for her sake as for my own) I am compelled to say that I find the obstacles to it decisive and insurmountable.[2]

Auckland had a right to feel the deepest pain at this official missive. The matter had been discussed in newspapers. Indeed, a caricaturist ventured to publish a sketch showing Pitt as Adam conducting Eve to the nuptial bower in the garden of Eden, while behind it squatted Satan as a toad, leering hatred through the features of Fox. It is to be hoped that Auckland did not know of this indelicate cartoon when he replied to Pitt. That letter has very properly been destroyed. But we have Pitt's second letter to Auckland, in which he again assures him how deeply he is affected by hearing of "the sentiments of another person, unhappily too nearly interested in the subject in question." He adds these moving words: "Believe me, I have not lightly or easily sacrificed my best hopes and earnest wishes to my conviction and judgment." Auckland's reply of 23rd January reveals the grief of his wife and daughter. For two or three days they remained in absolute solitude, and that, too, in a household remarkable for domestic affection. To Pitt also the decision was a matter of deep pain and life-long regret. Thenceforth he trod the path of duty alone. On 7th February the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote to Auckland (his brother-in-law) that Pitt lived in seclusion and seemed dreamy. At a recent Council meeting his face was swollen and unhealthy looking. Probably this was the time at which Pitt informed Addington that he must take the helm of State.[1]

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[1] Wordsworth, "Prelude," bk. xiv.

[2] Pretyman MSS. Quoted in full, with Pitt's second letter and one of Auckland, by Lord Ashbourne ("Pitt," 241-4).

We can only conjecture as to the insuperable obstacles to the union; but it seems highly probable that they were of a financial kind. In the Pitt MSS. (No. 196) there is a brief Memorandum in Pitt's writing, of the year 1797, which must refer to his yearly expenses, either at Downing Street or at Holwood. It gives the liquor account of the steward's room as "£300 and upwards," and states that the other expenses of that room might be reduced from £600 to £300, those of his own wardrobe from £600 to £400, and those of the stable from £400 to £300. These figures do not tally with those of the Downing Street or Holwood accounts for the latter half of 1797, which will be stated later; and the loose way in which Pitt estimates his expenses is highly suggestive. We now know that he was heading straight for bankruptcy throughout this period; and probably on looking into his affairs he discovered the fact. It is also certain that he lent money to his mother. She seems to have lost on farming experiments at Burton Pynsent; for she charged her sons to defray her just debts incurred in this manner, and the Bishop of Lincoln in July 1801 stated that she owed to Pitt the sum of £5,800 on which she ought to pay interest but did not. Chatham also borrowed £1,000 from Pitt in August

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[1] Pellew, i, 183.

1791, and the fact that he paid not a penny to help to discharge the debts of his brother in the year 1801 seems to show that he himself was still in low water.[1]

Piecing together these fragments of evidence, we may infer that Pitt's near relations were a source of considerable expense, and that his own heedlessness had by this time further served to embarrass him. Therefore, his conduct towards Miss Eden, which at first sight seems heartless, was probably dictated by sheer financial need. We may also reject the spiteful statement in which Lady Hester Stanhope represented Pitt as saying: "Oh, there was her mother [Lady Auckland],—such a chatterer! and then the family intrigues! I can't keep them out of my house; and for my King's and my country's sake I must remain a single man." This is mere romancing. Pitt went to the Aucklands' house, not they to his. As for the remark about Auckland's intrigues, it clearly refers to the painful days after 1801, when Pitt broke with the household at Beckenham.

There was only one method whereby Pitt could have assured his marriage with Eleanor Eden, namely, by condescending to political jobbery. It was beyond the power of Auckland, a comparatively poor man, burdened with a large family, to grant a dowry with her unless Pitt awarded to him a lucrative post and sinecures. Of course any such step was wholly out of the question for either of them. In fact, Pitt opposed Auckland's promotion, opened up by the death of Lord Mansfield, President of the Council, though the public voice acclaimed Auckland as the successor.[2] Equally noteworthy is the fact that, early in the year 1798, Pitt appointed Auckland Postmaster-General, with an annual stipend of £2,500, but required him to give up his pension of £2,000 for diplomatic services.[3] It is pleasing to record that their friendship was not overclouded, except for a brief period.

There, then, we must leave this painful incident, but with heightened admiration for Pitt. Outwardly his conduct appears frigid in the extreme. Those, however, who probe the secrets of that reserved soul see that his renunciation of conjugal bliss resulted from a scrupulous sense of honour. As to the tenderness of his feelings at this time, Addington, who knew him well, gives striking testimony, averring that in his disposition there was "very much of the softness and milkiness of human nature." That was the real Pitt.

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[1] Ashbourne, 162, 179; G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 410, 429.

[2] "Auckland Journals," iii, 359. George III, who disliked Auckland, ordered the appointment of Chatham.

[3] *Ibid.*, iii, 387.

Finance was the all-absorbing question in that gloomy winter of 1796-7. The triumphs of Bonaparte in Italy and Hoche's attempt to invade Ireland sank into insignificance in comparison with the oncoming shadow of bankruptcy. The causes of this phenomenon are too technical to receive adequate treatment here. Certainly the Bank Crisis of February of 1797 was not due to the exhaustion of the nation; for the revenue testified to its abounding vitality. The Permanent Taxes maintained nearly the high level reached in the prosperous year of peace, 1792, and the figures for British Imports and Exports told the same tale, but the sums of money borrowed in the years 1796, 1797 undoubtedly strained the national credit.[1] Austria also applied to England for loans to enable her to continue the war; and Pitt helped her to borrow in London the sum of £4,600,000 in 1795, and £4,620,000 in 1796.

In one particular Pitt's action was unprecedented. In July 1796, during the interval between the seventeenth and eighteenth Parliaments of Great Britain, Austria sent urgent requests for pecuniary help so as to stay the triumphs of the French in Italy and Swabia. Pitt yielded and secretly remitted the sum of £1,200,000 as a loan. Undoubtedly this opportune help enabled Austria to make the surprising efforts which flung back the French to the Rhine, and checked the triumphal progress of Bonaparte. Nevertheless, Fox threatened his rival with impeachment for this unconstitutional action. Pitt replied with irresistible cogency that the crisis called for bold handling, and that England helped her ally to save the Empire and to maintain the contest in Italy. The House condoned his action by 285 votes to 81, a proof that he dominated the new Parliament as completely as its predecessor. He has been accused of lavishing money on the Allies; but, except in this instance, he did not by any means satisfy their claims. Moreover, they were justified in expecting England to provide money in lieu of the troops which her War Office failed to raise. Austria also solemnly covenanted to repay the loans; and her neglect to do so occasioned a bitter dispute which long held the two Powers apart. Pitt also refused her request for a loan in the year 1797. As far as possible, he discouraged the raising of war loans in London. Early in 1796 he did so in the case of Portugal from a fear that the export of bullion would impair credit.[1]

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[1] See Appendix for the sums borrowed, expended on the army and navy, and raised by the Permanent Taxes in 1792-1801.

At that time a novel expedient was shaping itself in his mind. On New Year's Day he drove Sir John Sinclair from Dundas's house at Wimbledon up to town; and on the way the baronet suggested the raising a great loan on easy terms by an appeal to the loyalty of Britons.[2] The need of some such device became increasingly apparent; for sinister symptoms began to appear amidst the alarms of the autumn of 1796. The threats of invasion led the Ministry to propose a special levy of 15,000 men to reinforce the army, of 20,000 irregular cavalry, and of 60,000 supplemental Militia (18th October). These expenses, in addition to the ever growing demands for the public services, involved a deficit of £18,000,000. It was most important to raise this sum promptly in order to uphold the credit and display the loyalty of the nation; for, as we shall see, Pitt had recently opened negotiations for peace at Paris in the hope that the late successes of the Austrians both in Italy and the Rhineland (which proved to be only temporary), would induce the Directory to accord fair terms to enemies who thus evinced their energy and vitality. After consultation with the officials of the Bank of England, he decided to raise the required sums, not by means of "contractors," but by appealing direct to the public. Accordingly, on 1st December, he adopted the unusual course of appealing to the Lord Mayor and the Directors of the Bank of England to encourage in every possible way the raising of an extraordinary loan of £18,000,000. The rate of interest, 5⅝ per cent., seems somewhat high in the case of a "Loyalty Loan," especially as Consols rose from 53¾ in September to 57 in November; but competent authorities agree that it was not too high.[3]

The response was most gratifying. The Bank subscribed £1,000,000, the Directors in their private capacity further contributing £400,000. Similar feelings were displayed in the City and in the provinces. Before the hour of 10 a.m. on 5th December, when the subscription list was opened at the Bank, the lobby of the hall and even the approaches were crowded with eager patriots, who fought their way towards the books. Those in the rear called to more fortunate friends in the front to inscribe their names. Within an hour and twenty minutes the amount which could then be allotted was made good, and hundreds retired disappointed. Similar scenes ensued on the two following days, the whole sum of £18,000,000 being subscribed in less than fifteen and a half hours.[1]

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxxii, 1297-1347; Pitt MSS., 102. Pitt to Boyd, 4th January 1796.

[2] "Mems. of Sir John Sinclair," ii, 276.

[3] W. Newmarch, "Loans raised by Pitt (1793-1801)," pp. 16, 25-33.

It was under these encouraging conditions that on 7th December 1796 Pitt made his Budget Statement, which included the proposal of further advances of £3,000,000 to our Allies. As a set-off to this, he pointed to the yield of the taxes and the Imports and Exports for the quarter as affording gratifying proof of the strength of the country. But, he added, "this flourishing state of our affairs ought not to lessen our moderation or abate our desire for peace." Those who blame him for continuing to pay £200,000 into the Sinking Fund, while he had to borrow large sums at a ruinous rate of interest, should remember that he believed this costly device to be only temporary in view of his efforts for peace.

The usually dull details of finance are at this point enlivened by the ingenious suggestions poured in upon Pitt for opening up new sources of revenue. The aim of financiers then being to press on the taxpayer at all points with the imperceptible impartiality of air, the hints as to the taxation of neighbours and rivals are of refreshing variety. Among the less obvious are duties on barges, pawnbrokers' takings, toys, theatre and concert tickets, buttons, corks, glass bottles, umbrellas, sheriffs and under-sheriffs, county commissioners and attorneys who keep clerks. On behalf of the last suggestion an anonymous writer points out that it would enhance the dignity of the legal profession. Another correspondent suggests a similar impost on physicians, surgeons, and chemists, ranging from ten guineas in London to three guineas in the provinces, in order to discourage the entry of illiterates. He also urges the need of stopping the increase of luxury and amusements by taxing hot-houses, horses and carriages let out on Sundays, organs, pianos, and all musical instruments, as well as the owners thereof, on the ground that this step will lessen the alarming growth of bankruptcies and divorces. A tax on armorial bearings is suggested as one which will not be resented by the rich. A fourth correspondent advocates a graduated Income Tax, ranging from *6d.* in the pound on incomes under £400, up to 5*s.* in the pound on incomes of more than £30,000 a year, and estimates the total yield at £62,625,000. The same writer urges the need of a tax on sinecures and pensions, and finally begs Pitt for a place for life, devolving on his son.[1]

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[1] On 2nd December 1796, Thomas Coutts, Pitt's banker, wrote to him: "Mr. Dent, Mr. Hoare, Mr. Snow, Mr. Gosling, Mr. Drummond, and myself met today, and have each subscribed £50,000. . . . I shall leave town tomorrow, having staid solely to do any service in my power in forwarding this business, which I sincerely wish and hope may be the means of procuring peace on fair and honourable terms. P.S.—We have subscribed £10,000 in your name, and shall take care to make the payments" (Pitt MSS., 126). Mr. Abbot ("Lord Colchester's Diary," 76) states that fear of a compulsory contribution helped on the Loyalty Loan.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer therefore had the choice of the direct attack on the purse or the increase of atmospheric pressure. For the present he chose the latter method, enhancing the duties on tea, wines, sugar, spirits, game licences, glass, tobacco, and snuff, besides raising the "Assessed Taxes" by ten per cent. The produce of some of these imposts is curious. Hair-powder yielded £197,000; the extra tea and wine duties £186,000 and £923,000, severally; those on tobacco and snuff only £40,000. Pitt's procedure in December 1796 was very cautious. He carefully watched the yield of the new taxes, in order to see whether the increase of price checked consumption. Finding that this did not happen in the case of tea and spirits, he further raised the duties on those commodities; but, on behalf of the poor, he exempted the cheaper kinds of tea. On the other hand he proposed to check the consumption of spirits by imposing an extra duty of five pence a gallon along with a surcharge on distillery licences. Further, as the duties on bricks, auction sales, sugar, bar iron, oil, wines, and coal had not lessened consumption, he again increased them. A questionable experiment was an increase in the postage of letters and parcels, and in the duties on newspapers, stage coaches, and canal tolls. A new House Duty, levied in proportion to the number of servants, is open to less objection. On the whole he expected the new taxes to yield £2,138,000. The total supply asked for was £27,640,000.

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[1] Pitt MSS. 272.

The financial outlook grew darker in the year 1797. At the close of January came the news of Hoche's expedition to Bantry Bay, which revealed the possibility of revolutionizing Ireland. On 4th February Pitt heard of the triumph of Bonaparte at Rivoli. The tidings told disastrously on markets already in a nervous state. A correspondent of Pitt attributed the decline to the action of the Bank of England at the close of 1795, in reducing their discounts. Fox and his friends ascribed it to the export of specie to Vienna; while Ministers and their friends gave out that it resulted from the fears of invasion, and the desire of depositors everywhere to withdraw their money and place it in hiding. Privately, however, Pitt confessed to Auckland that the export of gold brought matters to a climax.

The amount of specie in the Bank of England, which was nearly £8,000,000 in 1795, fell to £1,272,000 in February 1797. In reality the Bank was solvent, but it could not have realized its securities; and on several occasions the Directors warned Pitt that any further withdrawals of specie would bring on a crisis.[1] The final cause of alarm was a loan of £1,500,000 to the Irish Government, the first occasion on which any large sum was raised for that Administration.[2] On 25th and 26th February, then, crowds rushed to withdraw money from the Bank into which eleven weeks before they thronged in order to procure shares in the Loyalty Loan. So serious was the crisis that Ministers decided to intervene. On Sunday the 26th a meeting was held of the Privy Council, which issued an Order in Council empowering the Directors to refuse payments in cash until Parliament gave further orders on the subject.[3]

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[1] Ann. Reg. (1797), 130-42.

[2] Sir J. Sinclair, "Hist. of the Public Revenue," ii, 143.

[3] Pitt MSS., 272; "Parl. Hist.," xxxii, 1517; Gilbart, "History . . . of Banking" (ed. by E. Sykes), i, 46. On 25th February 1797 Pitt wrote a memorandum (Pitt MSS., 102), stating that the crisis was due to the too great circulation of paper notes by banks having limited resources. Their stoppage affected larger Houses and paralysed trade. He had wanted to meet the City men, who met on the 22nd to discuss the situation, but failed to agree on any remedy. Finally they agreed to meet at the Mansion House to discuss the issue of Exchequer Bills. Coutts, on 19th March 1797, informed Pitt that gambling in the Prince of Wales' Debentures, which exceeded £432,000, ruined the market for ordinary securities (Pitt MSS., 126). Sinclair had

For a few hours there was the prospect of a general collapse; and as the Bank issued no notes for less than £5, though Sinclair and others had advised the issue of £3 and £2 notes, small traders were threatened with a recurrence to barter. Fortunately on 27th February the Directors published a reassuring statement, and the Lord Mayor presided at an influential meeting on the same day, which decided to accept banknotes as legal tender for any amount. Thus a crash was averted. But Fox, Sheridan, and the Opposition ably accused Pitt of leading his own country to the brink of bankruptcy, even while he proclaimed the imminent insolvency of France. They thundered against the export of gold to the Emperor, and demanded a searching inquiry into the high-handed dealings of the Minister with the Bank and with national finance. "We have too long had a confiding House of Commons," exclaimed Fox; "I want now an inquiring House of Commons." Despite Pitt's poor defence of his loans to the Emperor, the Government carried the day by 244 votes to 86 (28th February); but the unwonted size of the minority was a sharp warning to curtail loans and subsidies. Apart from a small loan to Portugal in 1798, nothing of note was done to help Continental States until Russia demanded pecuniary aid for the War of the Second Coalition. In order to provide a circulating medium, the Bank was empowered to issue notes for £2 and £1, and to refuse cash payments for sums exceeding £1 (March to May 1797).

Meanwhile, shortly after the Bank crisis, came news of the failure of an American, Colonel Tate, with some 1,400 French gaol-birds, to make a raid at Fishguard in Pembrokeshire. A later legend sought to embellish this very tame affair by ascribing his failure to the apparition on the hills of Welsh women in high hats and scarlet cloaks, whom the invaders took for regulars. Unfortunately for lovers of the picturesque, the apparition occurs only in much later accounts.[1] Far more important were the tidings from Cape St. Vincent. There Jervis, with only fifteen ships, boldly attacked twenty-seven Spaniards while still in confusion after a foggy night. As is well known, the boldness of Nelson, in wearing out of the line so as to prevent the reunion

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vainly urged Pitt to compel bankers to find and exhibit securities for the paper notes which they issued ("Corresp. of Sir J. Sinclair," i, 87).

[1] H. F. B. Wheeler and A. M. Broadley, "Napoleon and the Invasion of England," ch. ii, have proved this.

of the enemy's ships, crowned the day with glory (14th February). The weakness of the Spanish navy stood glaringly revealed, and the fear of invasion, which turned mainly on a junction of their fleet to that of France, thenceforth subsided.

Jervis remarked before the fight that England never stood in more need of a victory. The news reached London most opportunely on 3rd March; for, along with the Bank crisis, came rumours of serious discontent among our seamen. Even Jervis could scarcely stamp out disaffection in the fleet that rode triumphantly before Cadiz; and in home waters mutiny soon ran riot. Is it surprising that sailors mutinied? In large part they were pressed men. Violence swept the crews together, and terror alone kept them together. The rules of the service prescribed flogging for minor offences, hanging for refusal to work. How men existed in the over-crowded decks is a mystery. On paper the rations seem adequate, a pound of meat per day, a proportionate amount of biscuit, and half a pint of rum. But these provisions were issued by pursers who often eked out their scanty pay by defrauding the crew. Weevilly biscuits and meat of briny antiquity were therefore the rule, excess of salt and close packing being deemed adequate safeguards against decay. Finally the indurated mass became so susceptible of polish as in the last resort to provide the purser with a supply of snuff-boxes. One little comfort was allowed, namely, cocoa for breakfast. But the chief solace was rum, cheap, new, and fiery, from the West Indies. This and the rope-end formed the *nexus* of the crew. As for the pay, from which alone the sailor could make his lot bearable, it had not been increased since the reign of Charles II. Thanks to the Duke of York, that of the army had been raised from 8¼*d.* to 1*s.* a day, though not in proportion to the cost of living, the net gain being only 2*d.* a day. The sailor alone was forgotten, and, lest he should come into touch with Radical clubs, leave of absence was rarely if ever accorded.

The men of the Channel Fleet were the first to resolve to end their chief grievances, namely, insufficient pay, withdrawal of leave of absence, and the unfair distribution of prize money. On putting back to Spithead in March 1797, they sent to Admiral Howe several round-robins demanding an increase of pay. He was then ill at Bath, and, deeming them the outcome of a single knot of malcontents, ignored them. This angered the men. His successor in command, Lord Bridport (formerly Sir Alexander Hood), was less popular; and when it transpired that the fleet would soon set sail, the men resolved to show their power. Accordingly, on 15th April, on the hoisting of the signal to weigh anchor, the crew of the flag-ship, the "Queen Charlotte," manned her shrouds and gave three cheers. The others followed her example, and not an anchor was weighed. On the next day (Easter Sunday) the men formed a central committee, sent ashore some hated officers, and formulated the demands outlined above, promising to fight the French if they put to sea, and afterwards to renew the same demands.

That Easter was a time of dismay in London. Ministers at once met in Cabinet Council and agreed to despatch to Portsmouth Spencer, first Lord of the Admiralty, along with Admiral Young, and others. Spencer's reputation for sincerity, love of justice, and regard for the seamen inspired general confidence; and when the Commissioners were joined by Bridport, Parker, Colpoys, and Gardner, there was hope of a compromise. The men allowed Bridport to retain his command, provided that he did not issue orders for sea; they enforced respect to officers; they flogged one man who became drunk, and ducked more venial offenders three times from a rope tied at the main-yard. Their committee of thirty-two (two from each ship), met every day on the "Queen Charlotte"; it demanded an increase of pay from $9\frac{3}{4}$*d.* to 1*s.* a day. But when Spencer promised to lay this request before the King, on condition of immediate restoration of discipline, the men demurred. Conscious of their power, they now claimed that rations must be served out, not 14 ounces, but 16 ounces to the pound; that the power of awarding heavy punishments for petty offences should be curtailed, extended opportunities being also granted for going ashore. In vain did Spencer and his colleagues protest against this dictation of terms. A personal appeal to the crew of the "Royal George" had no effect; and when Gardner vehemently reproached the men for skulking from the French, they ran at him; and he would have fared badly had he not placed his neck in a noose of a yard-rope and called on the men to hang him provided they returned to duty. The men thereupon cheered him and retired.

On 18th April the men's committee formulated their demands in two manifestoes. Further conferences took place, in one of which Gardner shook a delegate by the collar and was himself nearly murdered. The whole fleet then defiantly flew the red flag. Spencer and his colleagues returned to London for an interview with Pitt; and along with him and the Lord Chancellor they posted to Windsor to urge the need of compliance with the men's demands. Grenville, journeying from Dropmore, joined them, and a Privy Council was held. Pitt's and Spencer's views prevailed, and a Royal Proclamation was drawn up on 22nd April, pardoning the crews if they would return to duty. A horseman riding at full speed bore the document to Portsmouth in seven hours, and the fleet, with the exception of the "Marlborough," re-hoisted the white ensign and prepared for sea. The discontent rife at Plymouth also subsided. On 26th April, during a Budget debate, Pitt promised to provide for the extra pay to seamen and marines.

But on 3rd May an indiscreet opening of the whole question in the House of Lords by the Duke of Bedford led to a revival of discontent at Spithead. He upbraided Pitt with delay in introducing a Bill to give effect to the Royal Proclamation. Howe thereupon proceeded to justify his former conduct; and Spencer remarked that he did not expect to receive the King's commands to bring down any communication on the affair to the House of Lords. By an unscrupulous use of these remarks agitators inflamed the crews with the suspicion of ministerial trickery; and on 7th May, every ship refused to obey Bridport's orders to weigh anchor. The men arrested Colpoys and sent in all 149 officers on shore. Pitt thereupon, on 8th May, moved a resolution in the terms of the decision framed at Windsor on 22nd April. He begged the House for a silent vote on this question; but Fox and Sheridan could not resist the temptation to accuse him of being the cause of this second mutiny. Clearly it resulted from the remarks in the House of Lords on 3rd May, which led the seamen to believe that Pitt was about to play them false.

The Commons passed the resolution; but Whitbread, on the morrow, moved a vote of censure on Pitt for delay in dealing with this important question. Again Pitt pointed out that the promise given during the Budget debate sufficed for the time, but he admitted that preliminary forms and inquiries had absorbed an undue amount of time. Fox and Sheridan pounced down on this admission, the latter inveighing against the "criminal and murderous delay" of Ministers, whose incapacity earned the contempt of the House. Spying a party advantage in protracting these debates, Whitbread renewed his attack on the next day (10th May). Pitt replied with admirable temper, and showed that the delay in presenting a Bill arose partly from the action of the Opposition itself. Will it be believed that Parliament wasted two days, while the navy was in mutiny, in discussing whether Pitt had or had not been guilty of delay? The results were deplorable. An anonymous chronicler, hostile to Pitt, confessed that the men at Spithead were "better pleased with reading Fox and Sheridan's speeches than with the long-expected settlement of their claims."[1]

In this state of things Pitt despatched Howe ("Black Dick"), the most popular of the admirals, in order to convince the seamen of the sincerity of Government. The following is the letter in which he apprised Bridport of Howe's mission:

Downing Street, *May* 10, 1797.[2]

The account we have received this morning led to a great degree of hope that the distressful embarrassments which you have experienced may already in a great degree have subsided. You will, however, have learnt that in the suspense in which we remained yesterday, it had been determined to send Lord Howe with such instructions under the sign manual as seemed to us best adapted to the very difficult emergency. His presenting this commission seems still [more] likely to confirm the good disposition which had begun to show itself, and his not coming after the intention had once been announced might lead to unpleasant consequence [*sic*]. It was thought best to make this a civil commission in order not to interfere with the military command of the fleet, and at the same time to give the commission to a distinguished naval character, though not with any naval authority or functions. It was also thought that making a communication of this nature after all that had passed through some other channel than the commander of the fleet was for other reasons preferable and likely to be thought so by you.

I earnestly hope this measure will produce good effects and will both in itself and in its consequences be satisfactory to you. At all events I am sure you will continue to contribute your exertions with the same zeal and public spirit which you have shewn under such trying difficulties to bring this arduous work, if possible, to a happy termination.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxxiii, 473-516; "Hist. of the Mutiny at Spithead and the Nore" (Lond. 1842), 61-2; "Dropmore P.," iii, 323.

[2] Pitt MSS., 102. Lord Mornington deemed the surrender to the seamen destructive of all discipline in the future ("Buckingham P.," i, 373).

I hope I need not say how sincerely and deeply, in addition to the public difficulties, I have felt for the situation in which you have been placed. If the favourable turn which has been given to affairs should be happily confirmed, I look forward to the hope that your command may still be attended with circumstances which may repay you for the labour and anxiety with which you have had to struggle.

Howe found it no easy task to vindicate the good faith of Ministers; but by visiting each ship in turn, he prevailed on the men to submit to discipline. The 15th of May was a day of great rejoicing at Spithead; the men's delegates landed and carried the venerable admiral in triumph to Government House, where he and his lady entertained them at dinner. Three days later the whole fleet put to sea.

But already there had fallen on Pitt a still severer blow. On 10th May appeared the first signs of discontent in the ships anchored off Sheerness. In all probability they may be ascribed to the factious wrangling at Westminster and the revival of the mutiny at Spithead on 7th May. Seeing that the demands of the sailors had been conceded before this outbreak occurred at the Nore, nothing can be said on behalf of the ringleaders, except that amidst their worst excesses they professed unswerving loyalty, firing salutes on 29th May in honour of the restoration of Charles II and on 4th June for King George's birthday. Apart from this their conduct was grossly unpatriotic. On 12th May the crew of H.M.S. "Sandwich," headed by a supernumerary named Parker, captured the ship, persuaded eleven other crews to mutiny, and sent delegates to Portsmouth to concert action with Bridport's fleet.

In this they failed; and, had Vice-Admiral Buckner, in command at the Nore, acted with vigour, he might have profited by the discouragement which this news produced. He acted weakly; and the men paid no heed to the Royal Proclamation issued on 23rd May, offering the same terms as those granted at Portsmouth and pardon to all who at once returned to duty. Spencer and his colleagues came from London in the hope of persuading the men, but in vain. The men sought to tempt the one loyal ship, the "Clyde," from its duty. Fortunately this Abdiel of a false company was able to slip off by night and guard the entrance to Sheerness harbour. Government then hurried up troops and had new batteries constructed to overawe the fleet. Unfortunately, at the end of May, thirteen more ships, deserters from the fleets of Duncan and Onslow, joined the mutineers at the Nore. This event might have led to a double disaster. Stout old Duncan with only two ships sailed on undaunted to the Texel, where lay a Dutch fleet of fifteen sail preparing for sea. In order to impose on them he kept flying signals as if to consorts in the offing, a stratagem which entirely succeeded. The danger was, however, acute until, acting on Spencer's suggestion, Vorontzoff ordered a Russian squadron, then in British waters, to sail to Duncan's help.

Equally serious was the situation at the Nore. The mutineers, strong in numbers but lacking beef and beer, stopped the navigation of the Thames and captured provisions from merchantmen, thus causing a panic in London. On 4th June, after firing the royal salute, the crews seized some unpopular officers and boatswains, tarred and feathered them, and landed them at Gravesend, a spectacle for gods and men. In these and other reckless acts the fever expended its force. Food and water ran short; for the banks were strictly guarded, and ships ceased to arrive. The desperate suggestion of handing the ships over to the Dutch was frustrated, if it were ever seriously considered, by the removal of the outer buoys. One by one ships fell away and replaced the red flag by the white ensign. Enough force was now at hand to quell the desperate minority; and on 14th June the "Sandwich," renouncing the authority of Parker, sailed under the guns of Sheerness. A fortnight later Parker swung from the yardarm of that ship. His had been a strange career. The son of a tradesman of Exeter, he is said to have entered the navy as a midshipman, but to have been thrice dismissed from his ship for bad conduct. Settling down at Perth, he was imprisoned for debt, but gained his freedom and also a bounty for enrolling in the navy as a volunteer. His daring spirit and sturdy frame brought him to the front in the way that we have seen, the moral perversity of his nature largely determining the course of the mutiny at the Nore. After him twenty-two other mutineers were hanged.

Few men have done more harm to England than Parker. So heavy a blow did the Nore mutiny deal to credit that 3 per cent. Consols, which did not fall below 50 at the Bank crisis, sank to 48 in June, the lowest level ever touched in our history. After the collapse of the mutiny they rose to 55½. The serenity of Pitt never failed during this terrible time. A remarkable proof of his self-possession was given by Spencer. Having to consult him hastily one night, he repaired to Downing Street and found that he was asleep. When awakened, he sat up in bed, heard the case, and gave his instructions, whereupon Spencer withdrew. Remembering, however, one topic which he had omitted, he returned, and found him buried in slumber as profound as if he had not been disturbed. Fox and his friends were far from showing the same equanimity. Because the House by 256 votes to 91 opposed a motion for Reform which Grey most inopportunely brought forward in the midst of the mutiny, they decided to leave Parliament. But the effect of this "secession" was marred by the occasional reappearance of Sheridan, Tierney, and others who had loudly advocated it.[1] Unpatriotic in conception, it speedily became ludicrous from its half-hearted execution.

The question has often been raised whether the mutineers were egged on by malcontent clubs. There are some suspicious signs. A mutineer on board H.M.S. "Champion" told his captain that they had received money from a man in a black coat. This alone is not very convincing. But the malcontents at the Nore certainly received money, though from what source is uncertain. The evidence brought before the Committee of Secrecy as to the connection of the United Irishmen with the mutineers, seems rather thin. As to French bribery, the loyal sailors at Spithead in their address to the Nore mutineers bade them not to be any longer misled by "French principles and their agents, under whatsoever mask." It was also reported in August 1798 that the French Government paid an Irishman, Duckett, to go and *renew* the mutiny. The officials of the Home Office believed the London Corresponding Society to be guilty; and on 16th June one of them, J. K[ing], issued a secret order to two of his agents at Sheerness to discover whether two members of that society, named Beck and Galloway, had had dealings with the rebel crews. The agents, A. Graham and D. Williams, on 24th June sent to the Duke of Portland the following report, which merits quotation almost in full:[2]

> . . . Mr. Graham and Mr. Williams beg leave to assure his Grace that they have unremittingly endeavoured to trace if there was any connexion or correspondence carried on between the mutineers and any private person or any society on shore, and they think they may with

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[1] Holland, i, 84-91.

[2] "H. O.," Geo. III (Domestic), 137.

the greatest safety pronounce that no such connexion or correspondence ever did exist. They do not however mean to say that wicked and designing men have not been among the mutineers; on the contrary they have proof sufficient to found a belief upon that several whose mischievous dispositions would lead them to the farthest corner of the kingdom in hopes of continuing a disturbance once begun have been in company with the delegates on shore, and have also (some of them) visited the ships at the Nore, and by using inflammatory language endeavoured to spirit on the sailors to a continuance of the mutiny, without however daring to offer anything like a plan for the disposal of the fleet or to do more than insinuate that they were belonging to clubs or societies whose members wished well to the cause, but from which societies Mr. Graham and Mr. Williams are persuaded no such persons were ever regularly deputed. Neither do they believe that any club or society in the kingdom or any of those persons who may have found means of introducing themselves to the delegates have in the smallest degree been able to influence the proceedings of the mutineers, whose conduct from the beginning seems to have been of a wild and extravagant nature not reducible to any sort of form or order and therefore capable of no other mischief than was to be apprehended from a want of the fleet to serve against the enemy. In this state however they were unfortunately suffered to go on without interruption until they began to think themselves justifiable in what they were doing, and by stopping up the mouth of the Thames they were suspected of designs for which Mr. Graham and Mr. Williams can by no means give them credit. The want of beer and fresh beef prompted them to revenge, and that and nothing else induced them to interrupt the trade of the river. It was done on the spur of the occasion, and with a view of obtaining a supply of fresh provisions. Another thing, namely the systematic appearance with which the delegates and the sub-committees on board the different ships conducted the business of the mutiny may be supposed a good ground of suspecting that better informed men than sailors in general are must have been employed in regulating it for them. This Mr. Graham and Mr. Williams at first were inclined to believe too; but in the course of their examinations of people belonging to the fleet they were perfectly convinced that without such a combination and with the assistance of the newspapers only (independent of the many cheap publications to be had upon subjects relating to clubs and societies of all descriptions) and the advantage of so many good writers as must have been found among the quota-men, they were capable of conducting it themselves.

Graham and Williams arrested at Sheerness three strangers, Hulm, McLaurin, and McCan, who were making mischief. Nothing seems to have come of these arrests; and, despite the opinion of Pitt, expressed in his speech of 2nd June, we may dismiss the charge against the London Corresponding Society. It is clear, however, that busybodies circulated newspapers and pamphlets at Sheerness, Chatham, and Maidstone. The reports of the parliamentary debates of 3rd, 8th, 9th, and 10th May would alone have encouraged the mutineers; and the chiefs of the Opposition must bear no small share of responsibility for the disastrous events at Spithead and the Nore. They were warned that their nagging tactics would cause trouble in the navy. They persisted, in the hope of discrediting the Ministry. They succeeded in paralysing the navy; and the only excuse for their conduct is that their hatred of Pitt blinded them to the obvious consequences. From this censure I must except Sheridan, whose speech of 2nd June was patriotic; and he further is said to have suggested the plan of removing the buoys beyond the mutinous fleet.

For a brief space disquieting symptoms appeared in the army. An inflammatory appeal to the troops was distributed at Maidstone by Henry Fellows; and the same man addressed a letter to some person unnamed, asking him to send on 100 copies of the Ulster Address, 50 of "Boniparte's [*sic*] Address," 50 of "the Duke of Richmond's Letter," and 50 of Payne's "Agrarian Justice." The last named was found among the papers of John Bone, a member of the London Corresponding Society.[1] It is not unlikely that this propaganda was connected with that at Chatham barracks, where a seditious handbill was left on 21st May 1797, urging the men to cast off the tyranny misnamed discipline, to demand better food, better clothing, and freedom from restraint in barracks. "The power is all our own," it concludes. "The regiments which send you this are willing to do their part. They will show their countrymen they can be soldiers without being slaves . . . Be sober, be ready."[2] The paper was probably connected with the mutiny at the Nore. There were also some suspicious doings in London barracks. One of the incendiaries there was, "wicked Williams," who certainly had run through the whole gamut of evil. First as a clergyman, he ruined himself by his excesses; then as a penitent he applied to Wilberforce for relief, and, after disgusting even that saintly man, he in revenge carried round to certain barracks the signature of his would-be benefactor appended to a seditious appeal. Busybodies lacking all sense of humour therefore buzzed it about that the abolitionist leader sought to stir up a mutiny. On 13th May Pitt sent to him to sift any grains of truth that there might be in this peck of lies. The following unpublished letter from Wilberforce to Pitt shows that he advised him to use Williams so as to get at the grains:

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[1] "Report of the Comm. of Secrecy" (1799), 23; App., v, vi.

[2] From Mr. Broadley's MSS. See Ann. Reg. 1797, p. 250.

> 2.20 Sat^{y} mng. [May 1797?][1]
>
> Williams has been with Windham and is to wait on him again. The latter has been with me, and I have been guarding him about W$^{ms's}$ character, telling him that we wish to enable some proper person to watch W$^{ms's}$ motions by becoming acquainted with his person. Now, if this watch should be at or near Windham's, this point could be obtained. My other means of making the discovery have failed, and I can devise no other. Williams avowed to Windham that he had been employed in endeavouring to inflame the soldiery, but that his mind was not prepared to go the lengths he found it would be required to go. I am pretty sure the best way would be to give Williams money, a little, to infuse a principle of hope. I dare say he is hungry. You must place no dependence whatever on him, but if he would act for you, he would be a useful agent, and I think a little money in his case indispensable. I intreat you not to neglect this. I suppose there will now be no use in my seeing Ford.

In a second letter, written an hour later, Wilberforce urges Pitt not to neglect this note. Williams some years ago sought to make a mutiny; he was skilled in intrigue, had "held Jacobinical language, and was going on in the most profligate and abandoned way." This is all the information that the Pitt MSS. yield upon this question. But in the private diary of Wilberforce there is the significant entry: "Pitt awaked by Woolwich artillery riot and went out to Cabinet." The cool bearing of Lord Harrington, commander of the forces in London, helped to restore confidence. On 3rd June Government introduced and speedily passed a Bill for preventing seduction of the soldiery. There were rumours of an intended mutiny in the Guards; but fortunately the troops remained true to duty, and some of them helped to quell the mutiny at the Nore.

A survey of Pitt's conduct during these critical months reveals the limitations of his nature. He was wanting in foresight. He seems to have been taken unawares both by the Bank crisis and the mutinies. He met the financial crisis promptly when it became acute, though by means which caused incalculable inconvenience at a later time. The mutinies also ought to have been averted by timely concessions to the sailors, who needed increase of pay fully as much as the soldiery. For this neglect, however, the Admiralty Board, not Pitt, is chiefly to blame. When the storm burst, Ministers did not display the necessary initiative and resourcefulness; and the officials of the Admiralty must be censured for the delay in bringing forward the proposals on which Parliament could act. The Opposition, as usual, blamed Pitt alone; and it must be confessed that he did not exert on officials the almost terrifying influence whereby Chatham is said to have expedited the preparation of a fleet of transports. The story to that effect is of doubtful authenticity.[1] But there is no doubt that Chatham's personality and behaviour surpassed those of his son in face of a national crisis. The eagle eye of the father would have discerned the growth of discontent in the navy, and his forceful will would have found means to allay or crush it. Before the thunder of his eloquence the mewlings of faction must have died away. The younger Pitt was too hopeful, too soft, for the emergency. But it is only fair to remember the heartache and ill health besetting him since the month of January, which doubtless dulled his powers during the ensuing period of ceaseless strain and anxiety.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 189. See, too, "Life of Wilberforce," ii, 217; Windham ("Diary," 363) saw Williams on and after 13th May.

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[1] J. Corbett, "England in the Seven Years' War," i, 191. See Moreau de Jonnès, "Aventures de Guerre" (ch. xii) for his efforts to get at the mutineers.

CHAPTER XV

NATIONAL REVIVAL

A common feeling of danger has produced a common spirit of exertion, and we have cheerfully come forward with a surrender of part of our property, not merely for recovering ourselves, but for the general recovery of mankind.—PITT, *Speech of 3rd December* 1798.

THE desire of Pitt for peace with France led him in the autumn of 1796 to renew more formally the overtures which he had instituted early in that year. His first offer was repelled in so insolent a way that the King expressed annoyance at its renewal being deemed necessary to call forth the spirit of the British lion. Pitt, however, despatched Lord Malmesbury on a special mission to Paris; and the slowness of his journey, due to the bad roads, led Burke to remark: "No wonder it was slow; for he went all the way on his knees." Pitt's terms were by no means undignified. He offered that France should keep San Domingo and her conquests in Europe except those made from Austria. The French reverses in Swabia and the check to Bonaparte at Caldiero made the French Directory complaisant for a time; but his victory at Arcola (17th November), the death of the Czarina Catharine, and the hope of revolutionizing Ireland, led it to adopt an imperious tone. Its irrevocable resolve to keep Belgium and the Rhine boundary appeared in a curt demand to Malmesbury, either to concede that point or to quit Paris within forty-eight hours (19th December).[1]

It argued singular hopefulness in Pitt that, despite the opposition of the King, he should make a third effort for peace in the summer of the year 1797, when the loyalty of the fleet was open to grave doubt, when rebellion raised its head in Ireland, and Bonaparte had beaten down the last defences of Austria;

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 259-368; "Dropmore P.," iii, 239-42, 256, 287, 290; R. Guyot, "Le Directoire et la Paix d'Europe," ch. x.

but so early as 9th April he urged on George the need of making pacific overtures to Paris, seeing that Austria was at the end of her resources and seemed on the point of accepting the French terms. The untoward events of the next weeks deepened his convictions; and to a letter of the Earl of Carlisle, pressing on him the urgent need of peace, he replied as follows:

[*Draft.*] *Private.*

Downing St., 4 *June* 1797.[1]

I can also venture to assure you that I feel not less strongly than yourself the expediency of taking every step towards peace that can be likely to effect the object, consistent with the safety and honour of the country; and I have no difficulty in adding (for your *private* satisfaction) that steps are taken of the most direct sort, and of which we must soon know the result, to ascertain whether the disposition of the enemy will admit of negotiation. On this point the last accounts from Paris seem to promise favourably. You will have the goodness to consider the fact of a step having been actually taken, as confidentially communicated to yourself.

Three days previously Pitt had sent to Paris suggestions for peace. Delacroix, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose asperities were so unbearable in 1796, now replied with courtesy. Pitt therefore persevered, declaring it to be his duty as a Christian and a patriot to end so terrible a war. On the other hand Grenville pronounced the negotiation mischievous at the present crisis, when the French Government would certainly proffer intolerable demands. Much, it was true, could be said in favour of concluding peace before Austria definitely came to terms with France; and if Russia and Prussia had shown signs of mediating in our favour, the negotiation might have had a favourable issue. But neither of those Courts evinced good-will, and that of Berlin angered Grenville. He therefore strongly opposed the overture to France, and herein had the support of the three Whig Ministers, Portland, Spencer, and Windham. The others sided with Pitt, Lord Liverpool after some hesitation. On 15th June there were two long and stormy meetings of the Cabinet, the latter lasting until midnight; but on the morrow, the day after the collapse of the Nore Mutiny, the Cabinet endorsed the views of Pitt.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 102. See Stanhope, iii, App., for the letters of the King and Pitt; "Dropmore P.," iii, 310 *et seq.*; also C. Ballot, "Les Négociations de Lille," for an excellent account of these overtures and the European situation.

Thereupon Grenville entered a written protest, and wrote to the King, stating that he would offer his resignation if the times were not so critical. George thanked him, and in a highly significant phrase urged him to remain at his post so as "to stave off many farther humiliations."[1]

Malmesbury proceeded to Lille and entered into negotiations with the French plenipotentiaries, Letourneur, Pléville, and Maret. The last was he who came on a fruitless errand to London in January 1793, and finally became Duc de Bassano, and Foreign Minister under Napoleon. It soon appeared that the only hope of peace lay in the triumph of the Moderates over the Jacobins at Paris. The former, who desired peace, and had an immense majority in the country, at first had the upper hand in the Chambers. They were willing to give up some of the French conquests on the Rhine and in the Belgic Provinces, if their distracted and nearly bankrupt country gained the boon of peace. Their opponents, weak in numbers, relied on the armies, and on the fierce fanaticism which clung alike to the principles and the conquests of the Jacobins. Pitt was willing to meet France half-way. He consented to leave her in possession of her "constitutional" frontiers, *i.e.*, Belgium, Luxemburg, Avignon, Savoy, and Nice, besides restoring to her and her allies all naval conquests, except the Cape of Good Hope and Trinidad. Ceylon, a recent conquest, was to be reserved for exchange. So far, but no farther, Pitt consented to go in his desire for peace. Later on he assured Malmesbury that he would have given way either on Ceylon or the Cape of Good Hope. But this latter concession would have galled him deeply; for, as we shall see, he deemed the possession of the Cape essential to British interests in the East. Spain's demand for Gibraltar he waived aside as wholly inadmissible, thus resuming on this question the attitude which he had taken up in the years 1782-3.[2]

Far though Pitt went on the path of conciliation, he did not satisfy the haughty spirits dominant at Paris. It was soon evident that the only means of satisfying them were subterranean; and a go-between now offered himself. An American, Melvill, who claimed to be on intimate terms with the most influential persons at Paris, assured Malmesbury that he could guarantee the concession of the desired terms, on consideration of the payment of £450,000 to the leading men at Paris. Malmesbury at first believed in Melvill's sincerity and sent him over to see Pitt. They had some interviews at Holwood at the close of August, apparently to the satisfaction of the Prime Minister; for, after referring the proposal to Grenville, he laid it before the King. His reply, dated Weymouth, 9th September, advised a wary acceptance of the terms, provided that France also gave up her claim of indemnity for the ships taken or burnt at Toulon in 1793.

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[1] See Pitt's letter of 16th June to the King and new letters of Grenville in "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters"; "Windham's Diary," 368; C. Ballot, *op. cit.*, ch. v and App.; Luckwaldt (*vice* Hüffer) "Quellen," pt. ii, 153, 161, 176, 183.

[2] On 1st August 1797 Wilberforce wrote to Pitt a letter (the last part of which is quoted in Chapter XX of my former volume) urging him, even if the negotiation failed, to declare on what terms he would resume it. In Mr. Broadley's library is a letter of Lord Shelburne to Vergennes, dated 13th November 1782, which makes it clear that Pitt in 1782-3 was wholly against the surrender or the exchange of Gibraltar.

The King did not then know of the *coup d'état* of Fructidor 18 (4th September), whereby Augereau, the right hand of Bonaparte, coerced the Moderates and installed the Jacobins in power. The work was done with brutal thoroughness, prominent opponents being seized and forthwith deported, while the triumphant minority annulled the elections in forty-nine Departments, and by unscrupulous pressure compelled voters to endorse the *fiat* of the army. Thus did France plunge once more into a Reign of Terror, and without the golden hopes which had made the former experiment bearable. Such was virtually the end of parliamentary government in France. It is indeed curious that critics of Pitt, who label his repressive measures a "Reign of Terror," bestow few words of regret on the despicable acts of the "Fructidorians," whose policy of leaden repression at home and filibustering raids abroad made the name of Liberty odious to her former devotees.

The new tyrants at Paris withheld all news of the *coup d'état* until they could override the policy of the French plenipotentiaries at Lille. There it seemed probable that peace might ensue, when, on 9th September, the first authentic news of Augereau's violence arrived. Even so, Pitt hoped that the triumphant faction would be inclined to enjoy their success in peace. It was not to be. A member of the French embassy at Lille discerned far more clearly the motives now operating at Paris, that the new Directory, while making peace with Austria, would continue the war with England in order to have a pretext for keeping up its armies and acquiring compensations. In any case the successors of the pacific trio with whom Malmesbury had almost come to terms, demanded that England should restore every possession conquered from the French or their allies. This implied the surrender of the Cape, Ceylon, and Trinidad, besides minor places on which Pitt and his colleagues held firm. Brief discussions took place, Malmesbury continuing to show tact and good temper; but on Sunday, 17th September, the French plenipotentiaries requested him, if he could not grant their demands, to leave Lille within twenty-four hours. He departed early on Monday, reached London by noon of Wednesday, and saw Grenville and Canning immediately. Pitt, owing to news of the death of his brother in-law, Eliot, was too prostrate with grief to see him until the morrow. It then appeared that the Directory on 11th September issued a secret order to its plenipotentiaries to send off Malmesbury within twenty-four hours if he had not full powers to surrender all Britain's conquests.[1]

Even now there was a glimmer of hope. By some secret channel, Melvill, O'Drusse, or else Boyd the banker, Pitt received the startling offer, that Talleyrand, if he remained in favour at Paris, could assure to England the Dutch settlements in question if a large enough sum were paid over to Barras, Rewbell, and their clique. Pitt clutched at this straw, and on 22nd September wrote to the King, stating that for £1,200,000 we could retain Ceylon, and for £800,000 the Cape of Good Hope. While withholding the name of the intermediaries, known only to himself and Dundas, he strongly urged that £2,000,000 be paid down when a treaty in this sense was signed with France, provided that that sum could be presented to Parliament under the head of secret service. George, now at Windsor, cannot have been pleased that Pitt and Dundas had a state secret which was withheld for him; but he replied on the morrow in terms, part of which Earl Stanhope did not publish. "I am so thoroughly convinced of the venality of that nation [France] and the strange methods used by its Directors in carrying on negotiations that I agree with him [Pitt] in thinking, strange as the proposal appears, that it may be not without foundation."

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[1] Ballot, *op. cit.*, 302, who corrects Thiers, Sorel, and Sciout on several points.

George, then, was more sceptical than Pitt; and Grenville and Malmesbury soon had cause to believe the offer to be merely an effort of certain Frenchmen to speculate in the English funds. Nothing came of the matter. Melvill, O'Drusse, and Talleyrand on the French side, and Boyd in London, seem to have been the wire-pullers in this affair, which was renewed early in October; it may have been only a "bull" operation. The secret is hard to fathom; but Pitt and Dundas were clearly too credulous. Such was the conclusion of Malmesbury. It tallied with the pronouncement of Windham, who in one of his captious moods remarked to Malmesbury that Pitt had no knowledge of the world, and kept in office by making concessions, and by "tiding it over." Grenville (he said) thought more of the nation's dignity, but was almost a recluse. In fact, the Cabinet was ruled by Dundas, whom Grenville hated. Dundas it was who had sacrificed Corsica, which involved the loss of Italy.[1] Windham of course detested the author of the colonial expeditions, which had diverted help from the Bretons. In the Chouans alone he saw hope; for how could England struggle on alone against France if she could use all the advantages offered by Brest and Cherbourg?

Much can be said in support of these contentions; for now that the Directory threw away the scabbard, England felt the need of the stout Bretons, whose armies had become mere predatory bands. The last predictions of Burke were therefore justified. That once mighty intellect expended its last flickering powers in undignified gibes at the expense of Pitt and his regicide peace. Fate denied to him the privilege of seeing Malmesbury again expelled from France and whipped back "like a cur to his kennel." The great Irishman passed away, amidst inconceivable gloom, in his 68th year, at Beaconsfield (8th July 1797). In the view of Windham and other extreme Royalists, Burke was wholly right, and Pitt's weakness was the cause of all his country's ills.

We may grant that the summer of the year 1797 was one of the worst possible times in which to open a negotiation with triumphant France; for she was certain to exact hard terms from a power whose credit and whose prestige at sea had grievously suffered. Nevertheless, the mistake, if mistake it was, is venial when compared with the unstatesmanlike arrogance of the French Directors, who, when an advantageous and brilliant peace was within their reach, chose to open up a new cycle of war. Of late France had made use of the pretext that she must gain her "natural frontiers"—the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the Occan—for the sake of security against the old dynasties. By rejecting Pitt's overtures, her leaders now proclaimed their resolve to dominate Italy and Germany and to secure supremacy at sea. Their intrigues with British malcontents and the United Irishmen also showed their determination to revolutionize our institutions. Thus England was to be abased and insulted, while France lorded it over all her neighbours and prepared to become mistress of the seas. The war therefore ceased to be in any sense a war of principle, and became for France a struggle for world-wide supremacy, for England a struggle for national existence; and while democratic enthusiasm waned at Paris, the old patriotic spirit revived everywhere in Great Britain. The newspapers were full of appeals for unanimity; and on 20th November appeared the first number of that bright and patriotic paper, the "Anti-Jacobin," under the editorship of Canning and Hookham Frere, which played no small part in arousing national ardour. On the next day the French Directory issued an appeal to France to bestir herself to overthrow the British power, and to dictate peace at London.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," iii, 377, 380-2; "Malmesbury Diaries," iii, 590.

There was need of unanimity; for while France was stamping out revolt, and Great Britain felt increasingly the drag of Ireland, Pitt encountered an antagonist of unsuspected strength. Over against his diffuse and tentative policy stood that of Bonaparte, clear-cut, and for the present everywhere victorious. While Pitt pursued that will o' the wisp, a money-bought peace, the Corsican was bullying the Austrian negotiators at Udine and Campo Formio. Finally his gasconnades carried the day; and on 17th October Austria signed away her Netherlands to France and her Milanese and Mantuan territories to the newly created Cisalpine Republic. Bonaparte and the Emperor, however, agreed to partition the unoffending Venetian State, the western half of which went to the Cisalpines, the eastern half, along with Venice, Istria, and Dalmatia, to the Hapsburgs. The Court of Vienna struggled hard to gain the Ionian Islands; but on these, and on Malta, the young general had set his heart as the natural stepping-stones to Egypt. At the close of the year he returned to Paris in triumph, and was invited by the Director, Barras, to go and conquer England.

Some such effort, either directly against London, or by a deadly ricochet through Ireland, would have been made, had not Duncan, on 11th October, crushed the Dutch off Camperdown, taking nine ships out of fifteen. The consequences were far reaching. The Dutch navy was paralysed; and without it the squadrons at Cherbourg and Brest were not yet strong enough to attack our coasts, until the Toulon and Cadiz fleets sailed northwards. Bonaparte, who was sent to survey the ports in Flanders and the north of France, reported to the Directory on 23rd February 1798 that there were fitting out at Brest only ten sail-of-the-line, which moreover had no crews, and that the preparations were everywhere so backward as to compel Government to postpone the invasion until 1799. The wish was father to that thought. Already he had laid his plans to seize Egypt, and now strongly advised the orientation of French policy. A third possible course was the closing of all continental ports against England, an adumbration of the Continental System of 1806-13 for assuring the ruin of British commerce.

The news of Camperdown and Campo Formio added vigour to Pitt's appeal for national union in his great speech of 10th November, in which he gave proofs of the domineering spirit of the party now triumphant at Paris. Very telling, also, was his taunt at the Whig press, "which knows no other use of English liberty but servilely to retail and transcribe French opinions." Sinclair, who had moved a hostile amendment, was so impressed as to withdraw it; and thus at last the violence of the French Jacobins conduced to harmony at Westminster.

Already there were signs that the struggle was one of financial endurance. At the close of November 1797 Pitt appealed to the patriotism of Britons to raise £25,500,000 for the estimated expenses of the next year, in order to display the wealth and strength of the kingdom. He therefore proposed to ask the Bank of England to advance £3,000,000 on Exchequer bills; and he urged the propertied classes to submit to the trebling of the Assessed Taxes on inhabited houses, windows, male servants, horses, carriages, etc. The trebling of these imposts took the House by surprise, and drew from Tierney, now, in the absence of Fox, the leader of Opposition, the taunt that Pitt had to cringe to the Bank for help. A few days later Pitt explained that the triple duty would fall only upon those who already paid £3 or more on that score. If the sum paid were less than £1 it would be halved. Those who paid £3 or more would be charged at an increasing rate, until, when the sum paid exceeded £50, the amount would be quadrupled. Nor was this all. By a third Resolution he outlined the scheme of what was in part a progressive Income Tax. Incomes under £60 were exempt; those between £60 and £65 paid at the rate of *2d.* in the pound; and the proportion rose until it reached *2s.* in the pound for incomes of £200 or more.

Though Pitt pointed out the need of a patriotic rejoinder to the threats of the French Government, the new Assessed Taxes aroused a furious opposition. "The chief and almost only topic of conversation is the new taxes," wrote Theresa Parker to Lady Stanley of Alderley. "How people are to live if the Bill is passed I know not. I understand the Opposition are much elated with the hope of the Bill's being passed, as they consider Mr. Pitt infallibly ruined if it does, and that he must go out."[1] The patriotism of London equalled that of the Foxites. City men, forgetting that the present proposals were due to the shameless evasions of the Assessed Taxes, raised a threatening din, some of them declaring that Pitt would be assaulted if he came into the City. Several supporters of Pitt, among them the Duke of Leeds, Sir William Pulteney and Henry Thornton, opposed the new imposts, and the Opposition was jubilantly furious. Sheridan, who returned to the fray, declared that though the poor escaped these taxes they would starve; for the wealth which employed them would be dried up. Hobhouse dubbed the Finance Bill inquisitorial, degrading, and fatal to the virtues of truthfulness and charity. Squires bemoaned the loss of horses and carriages and the hard lot of their footmen. Arthur Young warned Pitt that if the taxes could not be evaded, gentlemen must sell their estates and live in town. Bath, he was assured, welcomed the new imposts because they would drive very many families thither. He begged Pitt to reconsider his proposals, and, instead of them, to tax "all places of public diversion, public dinners, clubs, etc., not forgetting debating societies and Jacobin meetings"; for this would restrain

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxxiii, 1076; "The Early Married Life of Lady Stanley 149.

"that violent emigration to towns, which the measure dreadfully threatens."[1]

A sign of the hopes of the Opposition was the re-appearance of Fox. Resuming his long vacant seat, he declared Pitt to be the author of the country's ruin. For himself, he upheld the funding system, that is, the plan of shelving the debt upon the future. The palm for abusiveness was, however, carried off by Nicholls and Jekyll. The former taunted Pitt with losing all his Allies and raising France to undreamt-of heights of power, with failing to gain peace, with exhausting the credit and the resources of England until now he had to requisition men's incomes. As for Jekyll, he called the present proposals "a detestable measure of extortion and rapacity." The debates dragged on, until, after a powerful reply by Pitt in the small hours of 5th January 1798 the Finance Bill passed the Commons by 196 to 71. The Lords showed a far better spirit. Carrington declared that Pitt's proposals did not go far enough. Lord Holland in a maiden speech pronounced them worse than the progressive taxes of Robespierre. But Liverpool, Auckland, and Grenville supported the measure, which passed on 9th January 1798 by 75 to 6.

For a time the Finance Bill injured Pitt's popularity in the City. During the State procession on 19th December 1797, when the King, Queen, and Ministers went to St. Paul's to render thanks for the naval triumphs of that year, he was hooted by the mob; and on the return his carriage had to be guarded by a squadron of horse. Nevertheless, it is now clear that Pitt's proposals were both necessary and salutary. The predictions of commercial ruin were soon refuted by the trade returns. Imports in 1798 showed an increase of £6,844,000 over those of 1797; exports, an increase of £3,974,000. In part, doubtless, these gratifying results may be ascribed to renewed security at sea, the bountiful harvest of 1798, and the recent opening up of trade to Turkey and the Levant. But, under a vicious fiscal system, trade would not have recovered from the severe depression of 1797. Amidst all the troubles of the Irish Rebellion of 1798, Pitt derived comfort from the signs of returning prosperity.

The confidence which he inspired was proved by the success of a remarkable experiment, the Patriotic Contribution. In the midst of the acrid debates on the Finance Bill, the Speaker, Addington, tactfully suggested the insertion of a clause enabling the Bank of England to receive voluntary gifts, amounting to one-fifth of the income. Pitt gratefully adopted the proposal, and early in the year 1798 patriots began to send in large sums. Pitt, Addington, Dundas, the Lord Chancellor, and Lords Kenyon and Romney at once gave £2,000 each; the King graciously allotted from the Privy Purse £20,000 a year during the war. The generous impulse speedily prevailed, and the City once more showed its patriotism by subscribing £10,000; the Bank gave £200,000. A platform was erected near the Royal Exchange for the receipt of contributions. Among others, a wealthy calico printer, Robert Peel, father of the statesman, felt the call of duty to give £10,000. He went back to Bury (Lancashire) in some anxiety to inform his partner, Yates, of this unbusinesslike conduct, whereupon the latter remarked, "You might as well have made it £20,000 while you were about it." If all Britons had acted in this spirit, the new taxes would have met the needs of the war. But, as will subsequently appear, they failed to balance the ever growing expenditure, and Pitt in 1799-1800 had to raise loans on the security of the Income Tax to make up its deficiencies.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 193. Mr. Abbott, afterwards Lord Colchester, differed from his patron, the Duke of Leeds, on this question. See "Lord Colchester's Diaries," i, 124-31.

A pleasing proof of the restoration of friendship between Auckland and Pitt appears in a letter in which the former asked advice as to the amount which he should give to this fund. He was now Postmaster-General, and stated that his total gross income was £3,600, out of which the new taxes took £320. Should he give £1,000? And what should he give for his brother, Morton Eden, ambassador at Vienna? Pitt answered that £700 should be the utmost for him; the sum of £500 for Morton would also be generous.[1] On the whole, £2,300,000 was subscribed—a sum which contrasts remarkably with the driblets that came in as a response to Necker's appeal in the autumn of 1789 for a patriotic contribution of one fourth of the incomes of Frenchmen.

Even so, Pitt had to impose new taxes in his Budget of 1798, and to raise a loan of £3,000,000. Further, on 2nd April, he proposed a commutation of the Land Tax. Of late it had been voted annually at the rate of 4*s*. in the pound, and produced about

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34454.

£2,000,000. Pitt now proposed to make it a perpetual charge upon parishes, but to enable owners to redeem their land from the tax at the existing valuation. The sums accruing from these sales were to go to the reduction of the National Debt. His aim, that of enhancing credit, was as praiseworthy as his procedure was defective. For there had been no valuation of the land for many years, and the assessments varied in the most surprising manner even in neighbouring districts. Doubtless it was impossible during the Great War to carry out the expensive and lengthy process of a national valuation; but, as manufactures and mining were creating a new Industrial England, the time was most unsuited to the imposition of a fixed quota of Land Tax.

Nevertheless, Pitt took as basis the assessment of 1797, and made it a perpetual charge upon each parish. The results have in many cases been most incongruous. Agricultural land, which was generally rated high, continued to pay at that level long after depreciation set in. On the other hand, large tracts in the manufacturing districts, rapidly increasing in value, paid far less than their due share. In some cases where a barren moor has become a hive of industry, the parish now raises its quota by a rate of .001 in the pound. In a few cases, where the fall in value has been severe, the rate is very heavy, in spite of remedial legislation. Pitt could not have foreseen differences such as these; but, in view of the rapid growth of manufactures in the Midlands and North, he should have ensured either a re-valuation of the parochial quotas or a complete and methodical redemption from the Land Tax. He took neither course, and that, too, in spite of the warnings of Lord Sheffield and Sinclair as to the injustice and impolicy of his proposals. They passed both Houses by large majorities, perhaps because he offered to landlords the option of redeeming their land at twenty years' purchase. Less than one fourth of the tax was redeemed before the year 1800, a fact which seems to show that the landed interest was too hard pressed to profit by the opportunity. As Sir Francis Burdett said, country gentlemen had to bear a heavy burden of taxation, besides poor-rates, tithes, and the expense of the mounted yeomanry. Thurlow compared the country magnates to sheep who let themselves be shorn and re-shorn, whereas merchants and traders were like hogs, grunting and bolting as soon as one bristle was touched. In defence of Pitt's action, it may be said that he hoped to secure a considerable gain by the investment of the purchase money in Consols and to enhance their value; but it appears that not more than £80,000 a year was thus realized.[1]

The prevalence of discontent early in 1798 and the threatened coalition of Irish and British malcontents will be noticed in the following chapter. Pitt was so impressed by the danger as to press for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and the renewal of the Aliens Act (April 1798). As happened in 1794, the revival of coercion produced vehement protests. Already the Duke of Norfolk had flung defiance at Ministers. Presiding at a great banquet held at the Crown and Anchor, on the occasion of Fox's birthday, 24th January, he not only compared the great orator to Washington, but hinted that the 2,000 men present might do as much as Washington's handful had done in America. Finally he proposed the distinctly Jacobinical toast, "Our Sovereign, the Majesty of the People." For this he was dismissed from the command of a militia regiment and from the Lord Lieutenancy of the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Fox chose to repeat the toast early in May 1798, when large parts of Ireland were on the brink of revolt. In so dire a crisis it behoved a leading man to weigh his words. But the wilful strain in his nature set all prudence at defiance. Thereupon several of Pitt's friends recommended a public prosecution for sedition, or at least a reprimand at the bar of the House of Commons. To the former course Pitt objected as giving Fox too much consequence, besides running the risk of an acquittal; but he saw some advantage in the latter course; for (as he wrote to Dundas) Fox, when irritated by the reprimand, would probably offer a new insult and could then be sent to the Tower for the rest of the Session. The suggestion is perhaps the pettiest in the whole of Pitt's correspondence; but probably it was due to the extremely grave situation in Ireland and the fear of a French invasion. Further, Fox had ceased to attend the House of Commons; and a member who shirks his duty is doubly guilty when he proposes a seditious toast. Pitt, however, did not push matters to extremes, and the course actually adopted was the removal of the name of Fox from the Privy Council by the hand of George III on 9th May.

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[1] "Parl. Hist.," xxxiii, 1434-54, 1481; "Mems. of Sir John Sinclair," i, 310, 311.

Sixteen days later, Pitt and Tierney had a passage of arms in the House. That pugnacious Irishman had thrust himself to the fore during the secession of Fox and other prominent Whigs from the House, and had to bear many reproaches for his officiousness. He also nagged at Pitt at every opportunity, until, on his opposing a motion of urgency for a Bill for better manning the Navy, Pitt's patience gave way. He accused the self-constituted leader of seeking to obstruct the defence of the country. The charge was in the main correct; for Tierney's opposition to a pressing measure of national defence was highly unpatriotic. Nevertheless, Tierney had right on his side when he called Pitt to order and appealed to the Speaker for protection. Rarely has that personage been placed in a more difficult position. Pitt was right in his facts; but etiquette required that he should withdraw or at least attenuate his charge. Addington politely hinted that the words were unparliamentary, but suggested that the Minister should give an explanation. Pitt stiffly refused either to withdraw his words, or to explain their meaning. There the incident closed. On the next day, Saturday, 26th May, Tierney sent Pitt a challenge, which was at once accepted.

We find it difficult now to take seriously a duel between a slim man of near forty who had rarely fired a shot in sport, never in anger, and a stoutly built irascible Irishman, for whom a good shot meant lynching or lasting opprobrium. Visions of Bob Acres and Sir Lucius O'Trigger flit before us. We picture Tierney quoting "fighting Bob Acres" as to the advantage of a sideways posture; and we wonder whether the seconds, if only in regard for their own safety, did not omit to insert bullets. The ludicrous side of the affair soon dawned on contemporaries, witness the suggestion that in all fairness Pitt's figure ought to be chalked out on Tierney's, and that no shot taking effect outside ought to count. But, on the whole, people took the incident seriously. Certainly the principals did. Pitt made his will beforehand, and requested Addington as a friend to come and see him, thereby preventing his interposition as Speaker. He asked Steele to be his second; but, he being away from town, Dudley Ryder took his place. Leaving Downing Street about noon on Whitsunday, 27th May, the pair walked along Birdcage Walk, mounted the steps leading into Queen Street, and entered a chaise engaged for their excursion. After passing the villages of Chelsea and Putney, and, topping the rise beyond, they proceeded along the old Portsmouth Road, which crosses the northern part of Putney Heath. At the top of the steep hill leading down into Kingston Vale they alighted, made their way past the gibbet where swung the corpse of a well-known highwayman, Jerry Abershaw, long the terror of travellers on that road. Did Pitt know that libellers likened him to the highwayman; for "Jerry took purses with his pistols, and Pitt with his Parliaments"? Lower down Pitt and Ryder found Tierney and his second, General Walpole, in a charming dell radiant with golden gorse and silver birches.[1]

But they were not alone. That fine Whitsuntide had brought many chaises along the road; and not a few curious persons skirted the rising ground towards Putney and Wimbledon. To these inquisitive groups rode up a tall bland-looking man, now more than usually sedate. It was Addington. Probably he was the most anxious man alive. He knew that his weakness as Speaker had freed Pitt from the necessity of apologizing to Tierney as the occasion demanded. Now, too, as Speaker, he ought to intervene. As a friend, pledged by Pitt to secrecy, he could do nothing but look on. Below, in the dell, the seconds saw to the pistols and measured the distance—twelve paces. Pitt and Tierney coolly took aim, and, at the signal, fired. Addington's heart must have leaped with joy to see Pitt's figure still erect. Again the seconds produced pistols, and again the pair fired: but this time Pitt discharged his weapon into the air. Was it a sign of his contrition for his insult to Tierney, or of his chivalrous sense of Tierney's disadvantage in the matter of target-space? Certain it is that Walpole leaped over the furze bushes for joy on seeing the duellists still erect.

Thus ended the duel, to the satisfaction of all present. Pitt had behaved with spirit, and Tierney had achieved immortal fame. But that the duel was fought at all caused deep concern. Hannah More was inexpressibly shocked at the desecration of Whitsunday; Wilberforce also was deeply pained. Indeed, he deemed the matter so serious as to propose to give notice of a motion for preventing duelling; but he dropped it on Pitt frankly assuring him that, if carried, it would involve his resignation. George III signified to Chatham his decided disapproval, and expressed to Pitt a desire that such an incident should never occur again. "Public characters," he added, "have no right to weigh alone what they owe to themselves; they must consider what they owe to their country." Thomas Pitt strongly reprobated the conduct of Tierney in challenging Pitt; for we find the latter replying to him on 30th May: "I shall feel great concern if the feelings of my friends betray them into any observations on Mr. Tierney's conduct reproachful or in the smallest degree unfavourable to him, being convinced that he does not merit them." This is the letter of a spirited gentleman. Buckingham evidently sympathized with Thomas Pitt; for he expressed his surprise that the Prime Minister should risk his life against such a man as Tierney. A more jocular tone was taken by the Earl of Mornington, soon to become the Marquis Wellesley. Writing to Pitt from Fort St. George on 8th August 1799 (three months after the capture of Seringapatam), he expressed strong approval of his Irish policy and concluded as follows: "I send you by Henry a pair of pistols found in the palace at Seringapatam. They are mounted in gold and were given by the late King of France to the 'citizen Sultan' (Tippoo). They will, I hope, answer better for your next Jacobin duel than those you used under Abershaw's gibbet."[1]—What became of those pistols?

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[1] Addington's description (Pellew, "Sidmouth," i, 206) fixes the spot. Mr. A. Hawkes, in an article in the "Wimbledon Annual" for 1904, places it in front of the house called "Scio," but it must be the deeper hollow towards Kingston Vale. Caricatures of the time wrongly place the duel on the high ground near the windmill. A wag chalked on Abershaw's gibbet a figure of the two duellers, Tierney saying: "As well fire at the devil's darning-needle."

The general opinion was adverse to Pitt's conduct. For at that time the outlook in Ireland could scarcely have been gloomier, and Bonaparte's armada at Toulon was believed to be destined for those shores. In such a case, despite the nice punctilio of honour, neither ought Tierney to have sent a challenge nor Pitt to have accepted it. The recklessness of Pitt in this affair is, however, typical of the mood of the British people in the spring and summer of that year. The victories of Jervis and Duncan, the rejection of Pitt's offers of peace by the French Directory, and its threats to invade these shores, aroused the fighting spirit of the race. As the war became a struggle for existence, all thoughts of surrender vanished. The prevalent feeling was one of defiance. It was nurtured by Canning in the "Anti-Jacobin," in which he lampooned the French democrats and their British well-wishers. Under the thin disguise of "the Friend of Humanity" he satirized Tierney in the poem, "The Knife-Grinder," a parody, in form, of Southey's "Widow," and, in meaning, of Tierney's philanthropic appeals. In a play, "The Rovers," he sportfully satirized the romantic drama of Schiller, "The Robbers." In one of the incidental poems he represented the hero, while in prison, recalling the bright days

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[1] Pretyman MSS.; "Dropmore P.," iv, 222.

at the U-
-niversity of Göttingen,
-niversity of Göttingen.

Pitt was so charmed with this *jeu d'esprit* that he is said to have added the following verse in the same mock-heroic style:[1]

Sun, moon, and thou, vain world, adieu,
That Kings and priests are plotting in;
Here doomed to starve on water gru-
-el, never shall I see the U-
-niversity of Göttingen,
-niversity of Göttingen.

A Prime Minister who can throw off squibs, and a nation that can enjoy them, will not succumb even in the worst crisis.

In truth, all patriots were now straining their utmost to repel an aggressive and insolent enemy. The Volunteer Movement more than ever called forth the manly exertions of the people; and one of the most popular caricatures of the time (May 1798) shows Pitt as a Volunteer standing rigidly at attention. Sermons, caricatures, pamphlets, and songs, especially those of Dibdin, served to stimulate martial ardour. Singular to relate, Hannah More (now in her fifty-third year) figured among the patriotic pamphleteers, her "Cheap Repository" of political tracts being an effective antidote to the Jacobinical leaflets which once had a hold on the poorer classes. Space will not admit of an account of all the agencies which heralded the dawn of a more resolute patriotism. Though the methods were varied, the soul of them all was Pitt.[1]

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[1] The hero is probably Robert Adair, the Whig "envoy" to St. Petersburg in 1791,

"the youth whose daring soul
With *half a mission* sought the frozen pole."

Pitt's authorship of the lines quoted above is denied by Mr. Lloyd Sanders in his Introduction to the "Anti-Jacobin" (Methuen, 1904); but his arguments are not conclusive. Lines 370-80 of "New Morality" are also said to be by Pitt.

The tone of public opinion astonished that experienced writer, Mallet du Pan, who, on coming from the Continent to England, described the change of spirit as astounding. There the monarchical States, utterly devoid of dignity and patriotism, were squabbling over the details of a shameful peace. "Here," he writes in May 1798, "we are in the full tide of war, crushed by taxation, and exposed to the fury of the most desperate of enemies, but nevertheless security, abundance, and energy reign supreme, alike in cottage and palace. I have not met with a single instance of nervousness or apprehension. The spectacle presented by public opinion has far surpassed my expectation. The nation had not yet learnt to know its own strength or its resources. The Government has taught it the secret, and inspired it with an unbounded confidence almost amounting to presumption." No more striking tribute has been paid by a foreigner to the dauntless spirit of Britons. Rarely have they begun a war well; for the careless ways of the race tell against the methodical preparation to which continental States must perforce submit. England, therefore, always loses in the first rounds of a fight. But, if she finds a good leader, she slowly and wastefully repairs the early losses. In September 1797 the French Directory made the unpardonable mistake of compelling her to prepare for a war to the knife. Thenceforth the hesitations of Pitt, which had weakened his war policy in 1795-6, vanished; and he now stood forth as the inspirer of his countrymen in a contest on behalf of their national existence and the future independence of Europe.

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[1] In "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters" I describe Pitt's attitude towards national defence. See an excellent account of the popular literature of the time in "Napoleon and the Invasion of England," by H. F. B. Wheeler and A. M. Broadley, i, ch. vii.

CHAPTER XVI

THE IRISH REBELLION

The dark destiny of Ireland, as usual, triumphed.—T. MOORE, *Mems. of Lord Edward Fitzgerald.*

VARIOUS orders of minds ascribe the Irish Rebellion of 1798 to widely different causes. The ethnologist sees in it the incompatibility of Celt and Saxon. To the geographer it may yield proofs of Nature's design to make Ireland a nation. If approached from the religious standpoint, it will be set down either to Jesuits or to the great schism of Luther. The historian or jurist may trace its origins back to the long series of wrongs inflicted by a dominant on a subject race. Fanatical Irishmen see in it a natural result of the rule of "the base and bloody Saxon"; and Whig historians ascribe it to Pitt's unworthy treatment of that most enlightened of Lords-Lieutenant, Earl Fitzwilliam. Passing by the remoter causes, I must very briefly notice the last topic.

The appointment of the Whig magnate, Fitzwilliam, to the Irish Viceroyalty in 1794 resulted from the recent accession of the "Old Whigs," led by the Duke of Portland, to the ministerial ranks. That union, as we have seen, was a fertile cause of friction. Fitzwilliam was at first President of the Council; but that post did not satisfy the nephew and heir of the Marquis of Rockingham. He aspired to the Viceroyalty at Dublin; and Portland, who, as Home Secretary, supervised Irish affairs, claimed it for him. Pitt consented, provided that a suitable appointment could be arranged for the present Viceroy, the Earl of Westmorland. This was far from easy. Ultimately the position of Master of the Horse was found for him; but, long before this decision was formed, Fitzwilliam wrote to the Irish patriot, Grattan, asking him and his friends, the Ponsonbys, for their support during his Viceroyalty. This move implied a complete change of system at Dublin, Grattan and the Ponsonbys having declared for the admission of Roman Catholics to the then exclusively Protestant Parliament. True, this reform seemed a natural sequel to Pitt's action in according to British Catholics the right of public worship and of the construction of schools (1791). Further, in 1792, he urged Westmorland to favour the repeal of the remaining penal laws against Irish Catholics; but the Dublin Parliament decisively rejected the proposal. Nevertheless, in 1793 he induced Westmorland to support the extension of the franchise to Romanists, a measure which seemed to foreshadow their admission to Parliament itself. There is little doubt that Pitt, who then expected the war to be short, intended to set the crown to this emancipating policy; for even in the dark times that followed he uttered not a word which implied permanent hostility to the claims of Catholics. His attitude was that of one who awaited a fit opportunity for satisfying them.

Unfortunately, the overtures of Fitzwilliam to Grattan and the Ponsonbys became known at Dublin, with results most humiliating for Westmorland. The exultation of the Ponsonbys and the Opposition aroused the hopes of Catholics and the resentment of the more extreme Protestants. Chief among the champions of the existing order was the Irish Lord Chancellor, Baron Fitzgibbon, afterwards Earl of Clare. A man of keen intellect and indomitable will, he swayed the House of Lords, the Irish Bar, and the Viceregal councils. It was he who had urged severe measures against the new and powerful organization, the United Irishmen, started in Ulster by Wolfe Tone, which aimed at banding together men of both religions in a solid national phalanx. Scarcely less influential than Fitzgibbon was Beresford, the chief of the Revenue Department, whose family connections and control of patronage were so extensive as to earn him the name of the King of Ireland. Like Fitzgibbon he bitterly opposed any further concession to Catholics; and it was therefore believed that the dismissal of these two men was a needful preliminary to the passing of that important measure. Rumours of sweeping changes began to fly about, especially when Grattan came to London, and had interviews with the Lord Chancellor. The frequent shifts whereby the Scottish Presbyterian, Wedderburn, became the reactionary Lord Loughborough were notorious; and it is one of the suspicious features of the Fitzwilliam affair that he, now Lord

Chancellor of Great Britain, should urge Pitt to treat Fitzwilliam with the confidence due to his prospective dignity. The Attorney-General, Sir Richard Pepper Arden, sent to Pitt the following caution:

September 1794.[1]

. . . My wife says she dined the other day with Grattan at the Chancellor's. I am sadly afraid that preferment in Ireland will run too much in favour of those who have not been the most staunch friends of Government; but, pray, for God's sake, take care that the new Lord Lieutenant does not throw the Government back into the hands of Lord Shannon and the Ponsonbys, nor turn out those who behaved well during the King's illness to make way for those who behaved directly the reverse. Excuse my anxiety on this head but I fear there is good reason for it.

Arden was correctly informed. Now or a little later, Fitzwilliam formed the resolve to dismiss Fitzgibbon and Beresford. On the other hand, the lowering outlook in Holland in the autumn of 1794 induced in Pitt the conviction that the time had not yet come for sweeping changes at Dublin. Accordingly, late in October, or early in November, he and Grenville thoroughly discussed this subject with the newly appointed Ministers, Portland, Fitzwilliam, Spencer, and Windham. Grenville's account of this conference, which has but recently seen the light, refutes the oft repeated statement,[2] that Pitt accorded to Fitzwilliam a free hand at Dublin. On the contrary, it was agreed, apparently with the full consent of the Viceroy-elect, that he should make no change of system.[3] Fully consonant with this decision was the reply of Pitt to Sir John Parnell, Grattan, and the two Ponsonbys, who in the third week of November 1794 begged him to lower the duties on inter-insular imports. While expressing his complete sympathy with their request, he declared the present critical time to be inopportune for a change which must arouse clamour and prejudice.[4] The conduct of Fitzwilliam was far different. Landing near Dublin on 4th January 1795, he on the 7th sent Daly to request Beresford to retire from office. Beresford refused, and sent off an appeal to his old friend, Auckland, with the result that the Cabinet soon met to consider the questions aroused by this and other curt dismissals. It being clear that Fitzwilliam was working with the Ponsonbys for a complete change of system, he was asked to modify his conduct. He refused to do so.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 108. See "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters," for a fuller investigation of the Fitzwilliam affair in the light of new evidence.

[2] Lecky, vii, 41-4.

[3] "Dropmore P.," iii, 35-8.

[4] Pitt MSS., 331.

The King now intervened in an unusually incisive manner. He informed Pitt that it would be better to recall Fitzwilliam than to allow further concessions to Catholics, a subject which was "beyond the decision of any Cabinet of Ministers." Accordingly, Fitzwilliam was recalled, his departure from Dublin arousing a storm of indignation which bade fair to overwhelm the Administration of his successor, Earl Camden.

Such is a brief outline of the Fitzwilliam affair. No event could have been more unfortunate. It led Irish patriots and the Whigs at Westminster to inveigh against the perfidy and tyranny of Pitt. He was unable to publish documents in his own defence, while Fitzwilliam crowned his indiscretions by writing two lengthy letters charging the Cabinet with breach of faith and Beresford with peculation. Nominally private, they were published at Dublin, with the result that Pitt and Camden were held up to execration and contempt. On reviewing this question, we may conclude that Pitt erred in not procuring from Fitzwilliam a written statement that he would make no sweeping changes at Dublin, either in regard to men or measures, without the consent of the Cabinet. It is, however, clear that Ministers regarded the verbal understanding with Fitzwilliam as binding; for Grenville, Portland, Spencer, and Windham sided with Pitt in this painful dispute, Portland's chilling behaviour to the Earl on his return marking his disapproval of his conduct.

Never did a Lord-Lieutenant enter on his duties under auspices more threatening than those besetting the arrival of Camden on 31st March 1795. After the swearing-in ceremony the passions of the Dublin mob broke loose. Stones were flung at the carriages of the Primate and Fitzgibbon. The rabble then attacked the Speaker's residence and the Custom House, and not till two of their number fell dead under a volley of the soldiery did the rioters disperse. The rebellion which Fitzwilliam predicted on his departure seemed to be at hand.

Camden, on whom this storm was to burst three years later, was not a strong man. He entered on his duties doubtfully and before long sent requests for his recall on account of his family concerns. He might well quail at the magnitude of his task. His instructions bade him by all available means discourage the claims of the Catholics, and rally the discouraged Protestants. Thereafter he might conciliate the Catholics by promising relief for their parochial clergy, the foundation of a seminary for the training of their priests, and some measure of education for the peasantry. The instructions ended thus: "Moderate, soothe, conciliate these jarring spirits. We have great confidence in your judgment, firmness, discretion."[1] The despatch refutes the oft-repeated assertion that the Ministry sought to inflame the animosities of Protestants and Catholics in order to force on the Union. That was the outcome of the whole situation; but in the spring of 1795 Ministers hoped to calm the ferment, which they rightly ascribed to the imprudence of Fitzwilliam. Their forecast for a time came true. In the first debates at Dublin the lead given by Camden's able Secretary, Pelham, served to close the schism in the Protestant ranks. Despite the vehement efforts of Grattan, his Bill for the admission of Catholics was thrown out by a majority of more than one hundred; and Ireland entered once more on the dreary path of reaction.

In the hope of softening the asperities of Irish life, Pitt favoured the plan of founding a seminary for the training of Catholic priests in Ireland. The proposal was alike one of justice and expediency; of justice, because the expense of training Irish priests in foreign seminaries had been a sore burden to their co-religionists; and of expediency, because the change promised to assuage the anti-British prejudices of the priests. Moreover, amidst the sweeping triumph of secularism in France and Belgium, most of the seminaries frequented by Irish youths had disappeared. The chief objections urged against the scheme were the narrowness of view certain to result from the curriculum of a semi-monastic institution, and the desirability of educating priests at Trinity College along with Protestants. On these grounds we must regret Pitt's decision to found a separate training college, albeit at first intended for the education of lay youths as well. The considerations above set forth, however, prevailed; and the chief legislative result of the year 1795 at Dublin was the charter establishing Maynooth College. Undoubtedly it was the outcome of Pitt's desire to pacify Catholic Ireland; but the unhappy conditions of the ensuing period told heavily against success. Indeed, as Wolfe Tone predicted, that institution fostered insular patriotism of a somewhat narrow type.

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[1] Quoted by Froude, "The English in Ireland," iii, 158-61.

The trend of things in the years 1795-7 set steadily towards rebellion. The discontent was most threatening among the sturdy Presbyterians of Ulster, chafed as they were by the exaction of tithes by the Protestant Established Church. The founders and the ablest leaders of the League of United Irishmen were Protestants. For a time they aimed merely at a drastic measure of Parliamentary Reform similar to that advocated by English Radicals. But the disappointment of the hopes of Grattan and Irish Whigs in the spring of 1795 exasperated all sections of reformers and impelled the League towards revolutionary courses. Sops like Maynooth they rejected with scorn; and at the close of that year, after the passing of certain repressive measures, their organization became secret; they imposed an oath on members and gradually devised means for organizing the whole of Ireland in brotherhoods, which by means of district and county delegations, carried out the behests of the central committee at Dublin.

Yet their system was far from absorbing the whole of the nation. The vivacity of the Celt and the hardness of the Saxon tell against close union; and where the two races dwell side by side, solidarity is a dream. Now, as always, in times of excitement the old animosities burst forth. The Catholic peasantry banded together in clubs, known as Defenders, to glut their hatred upon Protestant landlords and tithe-reaping clergy. Their motives seem in the main to have been agrarian rather than religious; but, as in Leinster, Munster, and Connaught the dividing lines between landlords and peasants were almost identical with those between Protestants and Catholics, the land feud became a war of creed. The ensuing horrors, midnight attacks, cattle-maiming, and retaliation by armed yeomanry, exerted a sinister influence upon Ulster, where the masses were fiercely Protestant. Certain of the Catholic villages were ravaged by Protestant Peep o' Day Boys, until the Irishry fled in terror to the South or West, there wreaking their vengeance upon squires and parsons. By degrees the Peep o' Day Boys became known as Orangemen, whose defiant loyalty sometimes caused concern to Camden and Pitt; while the Defenders joined the better drilled ranks of United Ireland, which therefore became a preponderatingly Catholic body.

Thus affairs revolved in the old vicious circle. Feuds, racial, religious, and agrarian, rent Ireland asunder. Disputes about land have ever sunk deep into the brooding imagination of the Celt; and the memories of holdings absorbed, or of tithes pitilessly exacted in lean years, now flashed forth in many a deed of incendiarism or outrage. To Camden there appeared to be only one means of cure, coercion. An Indemnity Act was therefore passed to safeguard squires and yeomen who took the law into their own hands. Then followed the Insurrection Act, for disarming the disaffected, and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act for strengthening the arm of the law.

The outcome was that the United Irishmen turned towards France. Even in the year 1793 the Republic sent agents into Ireland to stir up revolt. Nothing definite came of those efforts, except that a section of Irish patriots thenceforth began to strive for separation from Great Britain. Early in 1796 Wolfe Tone proceeded to Paris to arrange for the despatch of a French auxiliary corps. On 20th April General Clarke, head of the Topographical Bureau at the War Office, agreed to send 10,000 men and 20,000 stand of arms. The mercurial Irishman encountered endless delays, and was often a prey to melancholy; but the news of Bonaparte's victories in Italy led him to picture the triumph of the French Grenadiers in Ireland.[1]

Another interesting figure is that of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Sprung from the ancient line of the Geraldines, and son of the Duke of Leinster, he plunged into life with the gaiety and bravery of a Celt. After serving with distinction in the British army in America he returned, became a member of the Irish Parliament, and in 1790 during the acute friction with Spain, received from his uncle, the Duke of Richmond, an introduction to Pitt, who offered him the command of an expedition against Cadiz. Nothing came of the proposal; but the incident reveals the esteem in which the chivalrous young officer was held. He soon married Pamela, the reputed daughter of the Duke of Orleans and Mme. de Genlis, whence he himself was often dubbed "Egalité." The repressive policy of Camden made him a rebel; and in May 1796 he made his way to Hamburg, hoping to concert plans for a French invasion. There he was joined by Arthur O'Connor, who impressed Reinhard with a sense of ability and power. Together the two Irishmen travelled to Basle, where they induced Barthélemy to favour their scheme. Meanwhile the French Directory entered into the plan of Wolfe Tone; the mission of Fitzgerald had no direct result, apart from the revelation of his plan to a travelling companion, who had been the mistress of a British Minister, and now forwarded a description of it to London.[1]

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[1] "Autobiography of Wolfe Tone," ii, chs. iv-vi; Guillon, "La France et l'Irlande."

Meanwhile Wolfe Tone had sketched the outline of the enterprise to Clarke and General Hoche, predicting to the latter, the commander-elect, that he would "amputate the right hand of England for ever."[2] As is well known, Hoche's expedition to Bantry Bay at the close of the year 1796 was an utter failure; and the sterner spirits in Ulster believed that the French had designed that it should end so. The malcontents therefore relaxed their efforts for a time, until, in the spring following, the mutinies in the British fleet aroused new hopes. It seems probable that their intrigues had some effect on events at the Nore. In quick succession United Ireland despatched to Paris two delegates, named Lewins and McNevin, to concert plans for another landing. The Directory sent an agent to treat with the League. Fitzgerald met him in London, and declared that the Irish Militia and Yeomanry would join the French on their landing. The United Irishmen also sought help from Spain.[3]

In Ireland the organisation went on apace until Camden struck sharp blows through the military. In the middle of May 1797, when the malcontents were excited by news of the second mutiny at Portsmouth, they rose in the North, but in three or four engagements the loyal Militia and Yeomanry broke up their bands. The South remained quiet, and the efforts to seduce the army and Militia were fruitless; but Lord Clifden, writing to Abbot on 15th May, predicted a general rising when the French attempted a second invasion, as they certainly would.[4] On 19th June Beresford wrote from Dublin to Auckland, stating that, but for the repressive measures and wholesale seizures of arms, not a loyalist's head would have been safe.[1] The spring of 1797 was indeed a time of great risk. But for the weakness of the Dutch and French navies, a landing in Ireland could have taken place with every chance of success. As it was, Camden's vigorous measures so far cowed the malcontents that the rebellion was deferred for a year. This respite probably saved the British Empire. Amidst the financial and naval difficulties of the first half of the year 1797, a telling blow struck at Ireland could scarcely have failed of success. Rarely were the enemies of England so formidable; never were her means of defence so weak. Fortunately, no blow was aimed at her until the month of October; and then, when the Dutch fleet set out to convoy an expedition to Ireland, it was utterly crushed by Duncan at Camperdown. There was therefore little risk of an invasion in force after October 1797, the very month which saw Napoleon Bonaparte set free from his lengthy negotiations with Austria. Verily, if Fortune pressed hard on Pitt at Toulon and in Flanders and Hayti, she more than redressed the balance by her boons at sea in the year 1797.

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[1] "Mems. of Ld. E. Fitzgerald," ch. xx.

[2] Tone, "Autob.," ii, 99.

[3] "Report of the Comm. of Secrecy" (1799), 22, 25; W. J. Fitzpatrick, "Secret Service under Pitt," ch. x; C. L. Falkiner, "Studies in Irish History," ch. iv; "Castlereagh Corresp.," i, 270-88.

[4] "Lord Colchester's Diary," i, 103.

Camden's letters to Pitt reveal the imminence of bankruptcy in Ireland throughout that year; and it is noteworthy that the loan raised for the Irish Government in January and February was the final cause of the Bank crisis in London. Even so, the Irish Exchequer was in dire need. On 25th April Camden informed Pitt that only £8,000 remained in the Exchequer, and he had no means for equipping the troops if the French should land. The sum of £200,000 must be sent at once. Such a demand at that time was impossible; and not until the end of May could Pitt forward the half of that sum, Camden meanwhile borrowing money in Dublin at $8\frac{3}{8}$ per cent. On 1st June he wrote to Pitt a confidential letter, laying bare his real aims. He urged him to do all in his power to procure peace from France. He had recommended this step in April; but now his language was most insistent. Assuming that it would be sheer madness to tempt fortune in another campaign, he suggested that, if the French terms were too onerous, Pitt should leave it to another Prime Minister to frame a peace. But whatever happened, Pitt must not lower his dignity by conceding Reform and Catholic Emancipation in Great Britain and Ireland. If those measures were inevitable, others must carry them. The latter would only satisfy the Irish Catholics for a time, their aim being to rule the country. The only way of escaping these difficulties was a Union of the Parliaments; but he (Camden) could not undertake to carry it, still less Catholic Emancipation. Finally he declared the Presbyterians of Ulster to be Republicans who would rise *en masse* if the French landed; but if Cornwallis were sent over to lead the troops, even that crisis might be overcome.[1]

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34454.

Pitt received this letter at the height of the mutiny at the Nore. He seems to have sent no answer to it: indeed, silence is the best reply to such an effusion. Camden's letters to Pitt show that he longed for his recall. In that of 16th November 1796 he concluded with the significant remark that he looked forward to the time when they would once more live as country gentlemen in Kent. Pitt had the same longing; but he never wrote a line expressing a desire to leave the tiller at the height of the storm. Obviously Camden was weary of his work. Fear seems to have been the motive which prompted his proclamation of martial law in several counties and the offer of an amnesty to all who would surrender their arms before Midsummer 1797. Those enactments, together with the brutal methods of General Lake and the soldiery in Ulster and Leinster, crushed revolt for the present but kindled a flame of resentment which burst forth a year later. As the danger increased, so did the severities of the Protestant Yeomanry and Militia. Thus, fear begot rage, and rage intensified fear and its offspring, violence. The United Irishmen had their revenge. In the summer of 1797 their two delegates, Lewins and McNevin, did their utmost to defeat the efforts of Pitt to bring about peace with France; and the former had the promise of the Director, Barras, that France would never sheathe the sword until Ireland was free.[2]

Again Camden begged Pitt to seek the first opportunity of freeing him from his duties in order to disentangle his private affairs which were in much confusion, the excess of expenditure over income at Dublin being a further cause of embarrassment. In fact nothing but a sense of public duty, in view of a hostile invasion, kept him at his post. So far from the truth are those who, without knowledge of the inner motives of statesmen, accuse them of delight in cruelty and of intriguing to provoke a revolt.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 326. Quoted with other extracts from Camden's letters, in "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters."

[2] Tone, "Autob.," ii, 272.

Early in the year 1798 the hopes of malcontents centred in the naval preparations progressing at Brest and Toulon.[1] Bonaparte also seemed about to deal a blow at London. In February he surveyed the flotilla at Dunkirk and neighbouring ports; and the hearts of English Jacobins beat high at the thought of his landing in Kent or Sussex. The London Corresponding Society, after a time of suspended animation, had now become a revolutionary body. On 30th January its new secretaries, Crossfield and Thomas Evans, issued an encouraging address to the United Irishmen. Somewhat later Evans and Binns formed a society, the United Englishmen, which imposed on its members an oath to learn the use of arms, its constitution in local, or baronial, committees being modelled on that of the United Irishmen. A society of United Scotsmen was founded about the same time; a society of United Britons also came to being, and issued a fraternal address to the United Irishmen on 5th January.

Most significant of these effusions is one, dated 6 Pluviôse An VI [25th January 1798], by "the Secret Committee of England" to the French Directory, containing the assurance that Pitt had come to the end of his borrowing powers and that the people were ready to throw off his yoke. "United as we are," it concluded, "we now only await with impatience to see the Hero of Italy and the brave veterans of the great Nation. Myriads will hail their arrival with shouts of joy: they will soon finish the glorious campaign." This address was drawn up fourteen days before Bonaparte set out for Dunkirk. It is clear, then, that its compilers were not so ignorant as that consequential tailor, Francis Place, represented them. Their chief mistake lay in concluding that Bonaparte intended to "leap the ditch." As we now know, his tour on the northern coast was intended merely to satisfy the Directors and encourage the English and Irish malcontents to risk their necks, while he made ready his armada at Toulon for the Levant.[2] Meanwhile the United Britons and United Irishmen sought to undermine Pitt's Government so that it might fall with a crash at the advent of the hero of Italy.

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[1] "Castlereagh Corresp.," i, 165-8.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 27808; "Report of the Comm. of Secrecy" (1799), App. x; "Nap. Corresp.," iii, 486-92. For Place see *ante*, ch. vii.

They knew not that the chief efforts of the "soldiers of liberty" were then being directed to the pillage of Rome and of the cantonal treasuries of Switzerland in order to provide funds for Bonaparte's oriental adventure.

Already Irish, English, and French democrats had been fraternizing. In January 1798 the United Englishmen sent over two delegates to Dublin to concert action, and about the same time a priest of Dundalk, named O'Coigly (*Anglicé* Quigley), came over from Ireland as a delegate from the United Irishmen to Evans's Society. Place asserts that his plan of proceeding to France was not known. But, as Place habitually toned down or ridiculed the doings of that Society, this is doubtful. Owing to secret information (probably from Turner, a British spy at Hamburg) the Government arrested Quigley, Arthur O'Connor, and Binns, a leading member of the London Corresponding Society, at Margate as they were about to board a hoy for France (28th February). A little later Colonel Despard, Bonham, and Evans were arrested. The evidence against all but Quigley was not conclusive, and they were released. The case against Quigley depended on a paper found by a police officer in his pocket, urging a French invasion of England. He was therefore condemned for high treason and was hanged on 7th June 1798. Probably Quigley had that paper from a London Society; but if so, why were not its officials seized? In some respects the Quigley affair still remains a mystery. Certainly it added fuel to the hatred felt for Pitt by British and Irish Jacobins.[1]

The evidence against O'Connor was weighty. It was proved that he was the leader of the party and that he knew Quigley well. He had a cipher in his possession, which was surely superfluous if, as he stated, he was travelling on private business. Probably his acquittal was due to his relationship to Lord Longueville, an influential Irish peer. Fox, Sheridan, and the Duke of Norfolk also proceeded to Maidstone to answer for the virtuous and patriotic character of O'Connor, a fact which probably led the judge to give a strangely favourable summing-up. The conduct of the Opposition leaders in this matter led their former comrade, the Earl of Carlisle, to declare that they had now sunk to a lower political hell than any yet reached.

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[1] W. J. Fitzpatrick, "Secret Service under Pitt," ch. iii; "Report of the Comm. of Secrecy" (1799), App. xxvi. For Despard, the plotter of 1802, see "Castlereagh Corresp.," i, 306, 326; ii, 4.

The Government, however, had not done with O'Connor. He was at once arrested at Maidstone on another charge (22nd May), and was in prison in Dublin during the rebellion. He then confessed that he had done more than any one to organize Leinster for revolt, also that he had had conferences with French generals with a view to invasion so far back as 1793; and he stated that he knew the member of the United Irishmen who in the winter of 1796 advised the French not to come until the spring of 1797.[1] There certainly was some misunderstanding between the Irish rebels and their would-be helpers; but the full details are not known. Finally O'Connor was allowed to retire to France; he became a French general, and helped Napoleon to concert plans for the invasion of Ireland, assuring him that, after the work of liberation was done, 200,000 Irishmen would help him to conquer England.

Meanwhile further news respecting the Franco-Irish plans reached Pitt through a man named Parish at Hamburg. An American friend of his at Brussels, while waiting at the municipal office for passports, saw those of two young Irishmen, named O'Finn, delegates of the United Irishmen of Cork. They had a large packet for the Directory at Paris, which contained the plans of the United Irishmen, the numbers and positions of the British troops and of the British warships between Dungeness and the North Foreland. The O'Finns stated this to the commissary of the Brussels bureau, who heard it with joy. The American secretly forwarded the news to Parish. The fact that the O'Finns had a list of the forces on the Kentish coast implied information from the English malcontents. Accordingly, on 19th April, Government seized the papers of the London Corresponding Society. They contained nothing of importance except the constitution of the Society, the oath to learn the use of arms, and the address to the United Irishmen. The Parliamentary Committee of Secrecy also believed that a plan was afoot for bringing to London a band of Irish fanatics to strike a blow which would paralyse Government while the French landed and Ireland revolted. This inference seems far-fetched; but the evidence at hand warranted the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, which Pitt procured from Parliament on the following day.

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[1] "Auckland Journals," iv, 52. I have published the statements of O'Connor, etc., and the news sent by a British agent at Hamburg, in the "Eng. Hist. Rev." for October 1910.

Place, with his usual perverse ingenuity, argued that Pitt nursed the conspiracy in order to be able to create alarm and govern despotically.[1]

Events were now moving fast in Ireland. Chief among the exciting causes were the repressive measures of Camden and the licence of the Militia and Yeomanry. So able and active a commander as General Abercromby failed to keep discipline and prevent military outrages. Not long after his return from the West Indies he reluctantly accepted these thankless duties (November 1797). His dislike of the work appears in the following letter, addressed probably to one of Pitt's colleagues:

Bantry, *Jan.* 28, 1798.[2]

DEAR SIR,

. . . I have found the country everywhere quiet, but there exists among the gentlemen the greatest despondency: they believe, or affect to believe, that there is a plot in every family, and a conspiracy in every parish, and they would abandon the country unless the troops were dispersed over the face of it for their protection. I believe the lower ranks heartily hate the gentlemen because they oppress them, and the gentle-

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[1] Pitt MSS., 324; B.M. Add. MSS., 27808; "Dropmore P.," iv, 167.

On 24th May 1798 Thelwall wrote to Thos. Hardy from Llyswen, near Brecknock, describing his rustic retreat, and requesting a new pair of farmer's boots for "Stella." He hopes that O'Connor has returned in triumph to his friends. Tierney's vote in favour of suspending the Habeas Corpus Act does not surprise him, for he is vulgar and a sycophant. Hardy is too angry with Sheridan, whose chief offence is in going at all to the House of Commons. Sheridan surely does well in encouraging the people to resist an invasion. "I remain steady to my point—'no nation can be free but by its own efforts.' As for the French Directory and its faction, nothing appears to me to be further from their design than to leave one atom of liberty either to their own or to any nation. If, however, Mr. Sheridan supposes that all his talents can produce even a temporary unanimity while the present crew are in power, even for repelling the most inveterate enemy, he will find himself miserably mistaken. No such unanimity ever can exist: I am convinced, nay, the Ministers themselves seem determined, that it *shall* not. The only way to produce the unanimity desired is to stand aloof, and let these ruffians go blundering on till our most blessed and gracious sovereign shall see that either Pitt and Co. must bow down to the will of the people or his British crown bow down to five French shillings. . . . But what have we to do with Directories or politics? Peaceful shades of Llyswen! shelter me beneath your luxuriant foliage: lull me to forgetfulness, ye murmuring waters of the Wye. Let me be part farmer and fisherman. But no more politics—no more politics in this bad world!" (From Mr. A. M. Broadley's MSS.)

[2] Pretyman MSS. See, too, "Diary of Sir J. Moore," i, ch. xi.

> men hate the peasants because they know they deserve to be hated. Hitherto rents have been paid, tithes have not been refused or taxes withheld. No arms or ammunition have anywhere been introduced, and there are no tumultuous assemblings of the people. I have often heard of disaffection among the militia; it may perhaps exist among a few individuals; but it cannot exist to any considerable amount. My inquiries have been unremitted in this particular. Were, however, a landing of the enemy to take place, I cannot say what might happen to a people dissatisfied with their situation and naturally of great levity; the new doctrines would give activity. We are preparing for whatever may happen and no labour or exertion shall be wanting.

Abercromby soon proclaimed his disgust at the excesses of his troops in unmeasured terms. True, he had much provocation. The militia officers under him were a loose swaggering set, whose cruelties to the peasantry during the prolonged search for arms were unpardonable. Further, their powers had been enlarged by Camden's order of May 1797, allowing them to use armed force without the requisition of magistrates, a step deemed necessary to screen the civil authorities from outrage or murder. Seeing that officers often put these powers to a brutal and arbitrary use, exasperating to the peasants and demoralizing to the soldiery, Abercromby determined publicly to rescind the viceregal mandate. The language in which he announced his decision was no less remarkable than the decision itself. On 26th February 1798 he stated in a general order: "That the frequency of courts-martial, and the many complaints of irregularities in the conduct of the troops in this kingdom having too unfortunately proved the army to be in a state of licentiousness which must render it formidable to everyone but the enemy, the commander-in-chief" forbids officers ever to use military force except at the requisition of magistrates.

That the army and militia did not assault their commander after this outrageous insult shows that their discipline had not wholly vanished. In face of the vehement outcries of the Irish loyalists against Abercromby, Camden showed much forbearance. He issued a guarded statement that Abercromby had been accustomed to command troops abroad, and did not realize the impression which would be caused in Ireland by his censure of the soldiery. Portland, however, openly blamed the commander-in-chief. Pitt's letter of 13th March to Camden shows that, had he seen Portland's censure before it went off, he would have toned down some of its expressions; but on the whole he heartily disapproved of Abercromby's indiscriminate rebuke to the army as not only unjust, but calculated to depress its spirits and encourage those of the French and the Irish malcontents. Portland's reprimand brought about Abercromby's resignation, which Camden sought to avert. Thus again events took the worst possible course. Abercromby was an able and energetic man; and his resignation, at the time when the arrival of the French was expected, undoubtedly helped to raise the hopes of malcontents. Well might Camden write to Pitt on 25th April that Abercromby had done much harm. With that commander's desire to repress the outrages of the soldiery everyone must sympathize. The manner in which he sought to effect it was incredibly foolish.

Meanwhile, the work of the conspirators had been undermined by treachery. One of the conspirators, named Reynolds, took fright and revealed the secret of the plot to an official at Dublin Castle (26th February), adding the information that the Dublin committee would hold a secret meeting on 12th March. The police, bursting in, seized eighteen members, including McNevin, along with their papers, amongst which were some incriminating O'Coigly. Lord Edward Fitzgerald escaped for a time; but an informer gained knowledge of his movements, and those of two brothers named Sheares. On his warning the Castle that they were about to arouse Dublin to revolt, Camden resolved to anticipate the blow. Two police officers, Swan and Ryan, tracked Fitzgerald to his lair on the 19th of May. They found him in bed. At once the fierce spirit of his race surged up. He sprang at them with the small dagger ready by his side and struck at Swan. The blow went home, while the pistols aimed by the officers missed fire. Turning on Ryan, he dealt thrust upon thrust. The two wounded men clung to him while he struggled and struck like a wild beast. He was dragging them towards the door when Major Sirr rushed in and shot him in the shoulder. Even then his convulsions were so violent that two or three soldiers, who ran upstairs, scarcely overpowered him. Swan soon died. The wounds of Ryan were not mortal. That of Fitzgerald was not deemed serious, but it mortified, and he passed away on 4th June, mourned by all who knew his chivalrous daring spirit.[1]

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[1] "Castlereagh Corresp.," i, 458-67; "Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox," ii, 299-302; "Mems. of Lord E. Fitzgerald," chs. 27-30.

The fury of Fitzgerald is intelligible. He was the one necessary man in the plot then coming to a head for the capture of Dublin on 23rd May. Among his effects were found a green uniform, the seal of the Irish Union, the line of route for the Kildare rebels in their advance, together with a plan for the seizure of the chief officials. The triumph of the Castle was completed by the capture of Neilson and the Sheares. Their papers showed that no quarter was to be given. Irish historians (among them Plowden) maintained that Pitt and Camden all along knew of the plot and allowed the conspirators to drive on their mine in order at the right moment to blow them up. There is no evidence to this effect, except during the few days preceding the blow. Camden's efforts were uniformly directed towards disarmament and coercion, so much so that he is reproached for his cruelty by the very men who accuse him of playing with the conspiracy. It is clear that he sought to prevent a rising, which was expected to coincide with a French invasion. In fact the only prudent course was to repress and disarm at all possible points.

The severity of the crisis appears in the letters which Beresford, Cooke, and Lees, officials at Dublin Castle, wrote to Auckland. In answer to Lord Moira's reckless charge in the Irish Parliament, that they were pushing on the country to rebel, Beresford on 10th April asks Auckland how can they, who are daily exposed to murder, push on a nation to deeds of violence which must fall on them? On 1st May he writes: "We think the Toulon squadron will join the expedition against Ireland. . . . Pikes are making in numbers, and the idea of a rising prevails. Kildare and Wicklow are armed, organized, and rebellious. Dublin and the county are very bad. The rebels expect the French within a month. Such is their last Gazette." On 7th May Lees writes to Auckland: "Lord Camden must steel his heart. Otherwise we are in great jeopardy." On 9th May Beresford states that it would be a good plan to seize a number of malcontents, threaten them with flogging and induce them to turn informers. He adds: "At present the quiet which prevails in some parts is deceptive. Where the country is organized, quiet appears. Where the organization is going on there is disturbance. In Kildare there are complete regiments, with large quantities of arms in their possession." On 10th May Lees writes that Galway is arming for revolt, and, nine days later after the arrest of Fitzgerald, he states that they expect a rising in Dublin on the morrow. On 21st May after the arrest of the Sheares, Cooke writes: "A rising is not given up; but I think it will not take place. Parts of Kildare will not give up arms. . . . A search for arms will commence. We are in good spirits." On 20th May Beresford informs Auckland of the receipt of news at the Castle from three different quarters that there would be a rising on the 21st, owing to the vigorous measures now taken by the Government.[1]

This is not the language of men who are nursing a plot. It evinces a resolve to stamp out disaffection before the Brest and Toulon fleets arrive. As for Pitt, his letters show a conviction of the need of continuing the repressive measures whereby Camden had "saved the country." He approved the plan of allowing officers to act without the orders of magistrates, seeing that the latter were often murdered for doing their duty. The thinness of his correspondence with Camden is somewhat surprising until we remember that his energies mainly went towards strengthening the army and navy. His letter to Grenville early in June shows that he expected news of the arrival of the French off the Irish coast, since they had got out from Toulon on 19th May.

It is not surprising that Ireland was thought to be their goal. Bonaparte and the Directory had kept the secret of their Eastern Expedition with far more care than Pitt displayed in worming it out. Certainly Pitt's spy system was far less efficient than has been imagined.[2] With ordinary activity the oriental scheme could have been found out from one of Barras' mistresses or from some official at Toulon. The fact that Bonaparte had some time previously engaged Arab interpreters might surely have enlightened an agent of average intelligence. So far back as 20th April French engineers in uniform, accompanied by interpreters, had arrived at Alexandria and Aleppo in order to prepare for the reception of large forces. The interpreters, it is said, "collect all possible information respecting Suez and the navigation of the Red Sea, as also particularly whether the English have any ships in the Persian Gulf. It is supposed that General Buonaparte will divide his army, one corps to be embarked from the Red Sea and pass round to the Gulf of Persia, the other part to proceed from Syria overland to the Euphrates, by which river they are to advance and join the remainder near the mouth of this river; from thence to make, *united*, the grand descent on the coast of Malabar or Deccan."[1] In these days it is difficult to imagine that this news did not reach Pitt until about 5th July.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34454.

[2] "Dropmore P.," iv, 230, 239.

The Irish malcontents were as ill informed as Pitt. Basing their hopes on the arrival of the French fleet, they prepared to rise about the end of May. But the arrests in Dublin hurried on their plans. The men of Kildare and Westmeath received orders from the secret Directory in Dublin to take arms on 23rd May, on the understanding that the whole of Ireland would revolt. They were to seize the towns and villages on the roads to Dublin, while the rebels in the city murdered the authorities and captured the chief positions. But on the 22nd the Government seized quantities of arms, and the presence of General Lake's garrison of 4,000 Yeomen daunted the United Irishmen; on the night of the 23rd-24th only the more daring of them stole about the environs, waiting for a signal which never came; and by dawn their bands melted away. In Meath also the rising failed miserably. A large concourse assembled on the historic slopes of Tara Hill, whence 400 Fencibles and Yeomen drove them with ease (25th May).

In Kildare and the north of Wicklow, where the influence of the Fitzgeralds made for revolt, large throngs of men assembled on the night of 23rd-24th May, and made desperate attacks on Naas and Clane, important posts on the roads leading to the capital. Their headlong rushes broke in vain against the stubborn stand of the small garrisons. But at a village hard by, named Prosperous, the rebel leaders fooled the chief of a small detachment by a story of their intention to deliver up arms. Gaining access to the village, they surprised the soldiers in the barracks, girdled them with fire, and spitted them on their pikes as they jumped forth. That night of horror ended with the murder of the Protestant manufacturer, whose enterprise had made their village what it was. A few days later General Ralph Dundas somewhat indiscreetly granted an armistice to a large body of Kildare rebels at Kilcullen on the promise that they would give up their arms and go home. Nevertheless a large body of them were found on the Curragh and barred the way to General Duff, who courageously marched with 600 men to the aid of Dundas. Duff was informed that these rebels would be willing to lay down their arms. His men were advancing towards them when a shot or shots were fired by the rebels, whether in bravado or in earnest is doubtful. The troops, taking it as another act of treachery, charged with fury and drove the mass from the plain with the loss of more than 200 killed. Thus, here again, events made for animosity and bloodshed. Protestants remembered the foul play at Prosperous; the rebels swore to avenge the treachery at the Curragh.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34454. News received through Sir F. d'Ivernois.

News of the first of these events sped across the Irish Sea on 25th and 26th May. They reached Pitt just before or after his Whitsunday duel on Putney Heath. Thick and fast came the tales of slaughter. On 29th May Camden wrote in almost despairing terms—The rebellion was most formidable and extensive. It would certainly be followed by a French invasion. It must be suppressed at once. The Protestants and the military were mad with fury, and called aloud for a war of extermination. The strife would be marked by unheard-of atrocities. For the sake of human nature, Pitt must at once send 5,000 regular troops. Camden added that cavalry were useless against lines of pikemen, a phrase which tells of the dogged fury of the peasantry. Nevertheless, his assertion that the rebellion was extensive proves his lack of balance. The saving facts of the situation were that the Ulstermen had not yet moved; that Connaught and Munster were quiet; and of Leinster, only Kildare, Wexford, and parts of Carlow and Wicklow were in arms. In Dublin murder was rife, but the pikemen did not muster.

Pitt's reply of 2nd June to Camden is singularly cool. In brief and businesslike terms he stated that, despite the difficulties of the situation, he had already prepared to despatch 5,000 men; but Camden must send them back at the earliest possible moment in order not to disarrange the plans for the war. Still more frigid was the letter of George III to Pitt. The King lamented the need of sending troops to Ireland, as they would thereby be cut off from "active service." Camden (he wrote) must really not press for them unnecessarily. However, as the sword was drawn in Ireland, it must not be sheathed until the rebels submitted unconditionally. Eleven days later the King wrote to Pitt that the new Lord Lieutenant "must not lose the present moment of terror for frightening the supporters of the Castle into an Union with this country; and no further indulgences must be granted to Roman Catholics, as no country can be governed where there is more than one established religion."[1] The thinness of the King's thought is in part redeemed by its tenacity. His mind resembled an elemental two-stringed instrument, which twanged forth two notes—Church and State.

In strange contrast to the calculations of the King and Pitt were the effusions of Camden. On 7th June he referred plaintively to Portland's despatch, stating that only 3,000 men could be sent. He warned Pitt that it was a religious war; priests marched at the head of the rebels, who swept together and drove at their head the reluctant. For the sake of humanity Pitt must send larger reinforcements. He added that Lake was unequal to the emergency. Fortunately, on that day Pitt received the consent of the Marquis Cornwallis to act as Lord Lieutenant and Commander-in-Chief in Ireland. As Camden had more than once pointed out the urgent need of that appointment, it is surprising to find him on 16th June upbraiding Pitt with the suddenness of the change. Surely it was no time for punctiliousness. Already the Ulstermen were rising, and 30,000 rebels were afoot in Wexford. But, as it happened, the worst of the trouble was over before Cornwallis could take the field. Landing on 20th June near Dublin, he heard news portending a speedy decision in Wexford.

It is not easy to account for the savagery of the revolt in that county. The gentry resided among their tenants on friendly terms; and the search for arms had been carried out less harshly than elsewhere. Gordon, the most impartial historian of the rebellion, admits that the floggings and half-hangings had been few in number, yet he adds that the people were determined to revolt, probably from fear that their turn would come. Neither is the religious bigotry of the rebels intelligible. The Protestants were numerous in Wexford town, Enniscorthy, and New Ross; but there seems to have been little religious animosity, except where tales were circulated as to intended massacres of Catholics by Orangemen. The Celt is highly susceptible to personal influence; and, just as that of the Fitzgeralds largely accounts for the rising in Kildare, so does the personality of Father John Murphy explain the riddle of Wexford. The son of a peasant of that county, he was trained for the priesthood at Bordeaux, and ardently embraced the principles of the French Revolution and the aims of United Ireland. His huge frame, ready wit, and natural shrewdness brought him to the front in Wexford; and he concerted the plan of establishing an Irish Republic on a strictly Romanist basis, a programme incompatible with that of Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen.

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[1] Pretyman MSS. The King also stated that Pitt had "saved Ireland" by persuading Pelham to return and act as Chief Secretary. Pelham was a clever man, but often disabled by ill health. In all 5,000 men were sent.

Murphy, marching with his flock to the house of a neighbouring Protestant clergyman, bade him and his terrified friends surrender. Meeting with a refusal, they fired the outbuildings; and when the flames gained the house, they granted the prayers of the occupants for mercy if they came out. On coming out the adult males were forthwith butchered. Meeting with large reinforcements from the hills, Father John's pikemen beat off a hasty attack by 110 men of the North Cork Militia, only seven of whom escaped to Wexford. Such were the doings on that Whitsunday in Wexford (27th May). Next, the rebels swept down upon Enniscorthy; and though beaten back from the very heart of the town by the steady valour of the defenders, these last were yet fain to fall back on Wexford. But for the plundering habits of the peasantry, not a man could have reached that town. The priest and his followers now took post on Vinegar Hill, a height east of the River Slaney, which overlooks Enniscorthy and the central plain of the county. There on successive days he and his council dealt out pike-law to some four or five hundred Protestants and landlords. Meanwhile, as no help drew nigh, Maxwell, the commander at Wexford, deeming that town untenable, beat a timely retreat westwards to Duncannon Fort on Waterford Harbour (30th May).

Master of Wexford county, Murphy and his colleague, Father Michael, proposed to raise Wicklow and Waterford. If these efforts succeeded, it was probable that Dublin and Munster would rise. Ulster might then revolt; and the advent of the French would clinch the triumph. In full confidence, then, the masses of pikemen moved against the loyalists at New Ross, an important position on the River Barrow. Parish by parish, the priests at their head, they marched, some 30,000 strong. At dawn of 5th June, when near the town, they knelt during the celebration of Mass. Then they goaded on herds of cattle to serve as an irresistible vanguard, and rushed at the old walls. General Johnstone and the 1,400 defenders were at first overborne and had to retreat over the bridge; but the plundering habits of the victors were their ruin. The soldiery re-formed, regained their cannon, and planting them skilfully, dealt such havoc among the disorderly mass, that finally it surged out into the plain.[1] After their defeat the rebels deposed Harvey, a Protestant, from his nominal command.

This success of the loyalists saved Waterford and Kilkenny from anything more than local riots; and Moore, moving up from Fermoy and Clonmel, soon threatened the rebel county from the west. The beaten peasants glutted their revenge on Protestant prisoners near New Ross; and a general massacre of prisoners at Wexford was averted only by the rapid advance of Moore. Meanwhile, Father John, moving into County Wicklow with a force some 30,000 strong, sought to break down the defence at Arklow. But that important post on the River Avoca was stoutly held by General Needham with some 1,500 men, mostly militia and yeomen. There, too, the priests led on the peasants with a zeal that scorned death. One of the peasant leaders rushed up to a gun, thrust his cap into it, and shouted, "Come along, boys; her mouth is stopped." The next moment he and his men were blown to pieces. Disciplined valour gained the day (9th June), and John and his crusaders retired to Vinegar Hill. His colleague, Father Michael Murphy, who had claimed to be able to catch Protestant bullets, was killed by a cannon-shot; and this may have decided the rebels to retreat.

The British Guards had now arrived, to the inexpressible relief of Camden and his advisers. Beset by reports of a general rising in Ulster and by the furious protests of loyalists against the inaction of Pitt, the Lord Lieutenant had held on his way, acting with energy but curbing the policy of vengeance, so that, as he informed Pitt, he was now the most unpopular man in Ireland. Nevertheless, before he left her shores, he had the satisfaction to see his measures crowned with success. The converging moves of Lake, Needham, Dundas, and Johnstone upon Vinegar Hill cooped up the rebels on that height; and on 21st June the royal troops stormed the slopes with little loss. The dupes of Father

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[1] J. Alexander, ". . . Rebellion in Wexford" (Dublin, 1800).

John no longer believed in his miraculous powers. The survivors broke away southwards, but then doubled back into the mountains of Wicklow. The war now became a hunt, varied by savage reprisals. Father John was hanged on 26th June. By his barbarities he had ended the dream of United Ireland. Few of the malcontents of Antrim and Down obeyed the call to arms of the United Irishmen early in June; and the risings in those counties soon flickered out. Religious bigotry enabled Dublin Castle once more to triumph.

Pitt was vehemently blamed by Irish loyalists for his apathy at the crisis. The accusation, quite natural among men whose families were in hourly danger, was unjust. As we have seen, even before the arrival of Camden's request, he took steps to send off 5,000 men. As the Duke of York and Dundas cut down that number to 3,000, and endeavoured to prevent any more being sent, they were responsible for the despatch of an inadequate force. If the French detachments intended for Ireland had arrived early in June, they must have carried all before them. But it was not until 22nd August that General Humbert, with 1,100 men, landed at Killala. Even so his little force was believed to be the vanguard of a large army, a fact which explains the revival of rebellion at the end of the summer.

Not until 1st September did Pitt hear this alarming news. At once he ordered all possible reinforcements to proceed to Ireland. There was need of them. The Irish militiamen under Lake and Hutchinson who opposed the French at Castlebar rushed away in wild panic from one-fourth of their numbers (27th August). Such were "the Castlebar Races." Probably the Irishmen were disaffected; for many of them joined the enemy. Cornwallis proceeded to the front, and with 11,000 men made head against the rebels and the French. The latter were now but 800 strong, and after a most creditable stand finally surrendered with the honours of war (8th September). Cornwallis issued a tactful bulletin,[1] commending his troops for their meritorious exertions and trusting to their honour not to commit acts of cruelty against their deluded fellow subjects. In point of fact 11,000 men with difficulty brought 800 to surrender and then gave themselves up to retaliation on the rebels. Fortunately the French Directory sent only small parties of raiders. A month later, Wolfe Tone, with a squadron, appeared off Lough Swilly; but the French ships being overpowered by Sir John Warren, Tone was captured, taken to Dublin, and cut his throat in order to escape the ignominy of a public hanging. Another small French squadron entered Killala Bay late in October, but had to make for the open. Thus flickered out a flame which threatened to shrivel up British rule in Ireland.

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[1] "Cornwallis Corresp.," ii, 395-404. For the panic in Dublin see "Dropmore P.," iv, 289 *et seq.* Cooke wrote to Castlereagh on 28th September that the Bishop of Killala and his family were saved from slaughter by a few French officers, "who execrate our savages more than they whom they have plundered." He adds that though the United Irishmen began the plot the Catholics are turning it solely to their own interests (Pitt MSS., 327). See, too, H. F. B. Wheeler and A. M. Broadley, "The War in Wexford" (1910).

What causes contributed to this result? Certainly not the activity and resourcefulness of Pitt and his colleagues; for their conduct at the crisis was weak and tardy. The Duke of York and Dundas must primarily be blamed for the despatch of inadequate reinforcements; but Pitt ought to have overruled their decision. Perhaps the Cabinet believed England to be the objective of Bonaparte and the fleet at Brest; but, thanks to the rapid growth of the Volunteer Movement, England was well prepared to meet an invading force and to quell the efforts of the malcontent Societies. In Ireland the outlook was far more gloomy. After the resignation of Abercromby, Camden and the officials of Dublin Castle were in a state of panic. Pitt did well finally to send over Cornwallis; but that step came too late to influence the struggle in Leinster. In truth the saving facts of the situation were the treachery of informers at Dublin and the diversion of the efforts of Bonaparte towards the East. The former event enabled Camden to crush the rising in Dublin; the latter left thousands of brave Irishmen a prey to the false hopes which the French leaders had designedly fostered, Barras having led Wolfe Tone to believe that France would fight on for the freedom of Ireland. The influence of Bonaparte told more and more against an expedition to her shores; but the Irish patriots were left in the dark, for their rising would serve to distract the energies of England, while Bonaparte won glory in the East. To save appearances, the French Government sent three small expeditions in August to October; but they merely prolonged the agony of a dying cause, and led that deeply wronged people to ask what might not have happened if the promises showered on Wolfe Tone had been made good.

It is recorded of William of Orange, shortly before his intended landing in England, that, on hearing of the march of Louis XIV's formidable army into the Palatinate, he serenely smiled at his rival's miscalculation. Louis sated his troops with plunder and lost a crown for James II. Similarly we may imagine the mental exultation of Pitt on hearing that Bonaparte had gone the way of Alexander the Great and Mark Antony. Camden and he knew full well that Ireland was the danger spot of the British Empire, and that the half of the Toulon force could overthrow the Protestant ascendancy. Some sense of the magnitude of the blunder haunted Napoleon at St. Helena; for he confessed to Las Casas: "If, instead of the expedition to Egypt, I had undertaken that against Ireland, what could England have done now?" In a career, illumined by flashes of genius, but wrecked by strange errors, the miscalculation of the spring of 1798 was not the least fatal. For of all parts of the British Empire Ireland was that in which the Sea Power was most helpless when once a French *corps d'armée* had landed.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SECOND COALITION

> To reduce France within her ancient limits is an object of evident and pressing interest to the future tranquillity and independence of Europe.—*Foreign Office Despatch of* 16*th November* 1798.

IT is difficult to realize that the independence of Europe was endangered by the French Republic. We associate the ascendancy of France in Spain, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and Holland with the personality of Napoleon; and by contrasting him with the pygmies who strutted on the stage after the death of Pitt we find the collapse of Europe intelligible. But a backward glance of one decade more shows France dominating the Continent. True, it was Bonaparte's genius which brought Austria to the humiliating Peace of Campo Formio (October 1797); but his triumphs in Italy merely crowned the efforts of France in 1793-5. After the close of his Italian campaigns a touch of her little finger unseated the Pope. At the Congress of Rastadt her envoys disposed of German duchies and bishoprics in the lordliest way. Switzerland she overran, plundered, and unified. Ferdinand IV of Naples and his consort, Maria Carolina, quaked and fumed at her threats. Prussia was her henchman. And in the first months of his reign Paul I of Russia courted her favour. French policy controlled Europe from the Niemen to the Tagus, from the Zuyder Zee to the Campagna.

Yet this supremacy was in reality unsound. So fitful a ruler as the Czar Paul was certain to weary of his peaceful mood. He had good ground for intervention. By the Treaty of Teschen (1779) Russia became one of the guarantors of the Germanic System which the French now set at naught. Moreover his chivalrous instincts, inherited from his mother, Catharine, were chafed by the news of French depredations in Rome and

Switzerland. The growth of indignation at St. Petersburg begot new hopes at Vienna. In truth Francis II, despite his timidity, could not acquiesce in French ascendancy. How could his motley States cohere, if from Swabia, Switzerland, and Italy there dropped on them the corrosive acid of democracy? The appeals from his father-in-law, Ferdinand of Naples, also had some weight. In fine the Court of Vienna decided to make overtures to London. On 17th March 1798 the Chancellor, Thugut, urged his ambassador, Starhemberg, to find out whether England would help Austria against "a fierce nation irrevocably determined on the total subversion of Europe, and rapidly marching to that end"; also whether Pitt would send a fleet to the Mediterranean, and, if necessary, prolong the struggle into the year 1799.[1] The entreaties from Naples were still more urgent.

Pitt resolved to stretch out a helping hand. Early in April he sought to induce Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, to send to that sea a strong squadron detached from Earl St. Vincent's force blockading Cadiz. His letter asking for information on several topics is missing; but Spencer's letter to Grenville throws so much light on the situation that I quote parts of it, summarizing the remainder:[2]

Admiralty, *April* 6, 1798.

"I send you by Mr. Pitt's desire a sketch I have made out of answers to the queries he put down upon paper yesterday in Downing Street. The result is to my mind a decision which I fear will not tally very well with our wishes and the views you have formed as the groundwork of the communication at present proposed with Vienna." He then states that, even if a Russian squadron appears in the North Sea, yet we cannot keep a permanent squadron in the Mediterranean. "For that purpose we should at least have 70 sail, as the Channel cannot be trusted with safety with less than 35, including the coast of Ireland, and the remaining 35 would be but barely enough to watch Cadiz and command the Mediterranean. Our best plan appears to me to be to maintain as long as we can a position between Lisbon and Cadiz, and when we are excluded (which I conclude we soon shall be) from the Tagus, to send Lord St. Vincent with the fleet he now has to take a sweep round the Mediterranean and do all the mischief he can to the French navy." If, he adds, the Spaniards come northward, our home fleet can deal with them: if they go to the Mediterranean and join the French there will not be much danger from so ill-combined a force when opposed to St. Vincent's fleet, "which I consider as being the best formed to act together that perhaps ever existed." If Austria would be satisfied with our sweeping round the Mediterranean, Spencer advocates that plan, but not that of keeping a fleet there, "because, exclusive of the great expense, it would leave the Spaniards too much at liberty."

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[1] "F. O.," Austria, 51; "Dropmore P.," iv, 170. The French took nearly 33,000,000 francs from the Swiss cantonal treasuries.

[2] Pitt MSS., 108.

In answer to Pitt's questions Spencer states the force disposable for the Channel and the coast of Ireland as 34, for the Mediterranean 24; 3 more were fitting for sea, and 8 others were nearing completion; but the chief deficiency was in men, 8,000 more being needed. He adds that the Neapolitans have 4 sail-of-the-line and 7 frigates: the French have 6 sail at Corfu; but he thinks not more than 10 sail can be equipped at Toulon. He regards the Venetian fleet as valueless.

Clearly Spencer underrated the force at Toulon and in the ports of North Italy. But, even so, the position was critical. To send an undermanned fleet into the Mediterranean, while France was preparing a blow at Ireland, seemed almost foolhardy. Nevertheless, Pitt resolved to do so. For, as he stated to Grenville on 7th April, they must encourage Austria to play a decisive part in resisting French aggression; and, in view of the revival of the old English spirit, he was prepared to brave the risks of invasion, deeming even that event preferable to a lingering and indecisive war. As usual, Pitt's view prevailed; and a few days later orders went forth to St. Vincent to despatch a squadron under Nelson to the Mediterranean, Austria being also apprised of this decision, in terms which implied the formation of a league against France. While Russia and, if possible, Prussia defended Germany, Austria was to expel the French from Italy.[1] Here again Pitt's hopeful nature led him to antedate the course of events. The new Coalition came about very slowly. England and Austria were held apart by disputes respecting the repayment of the last loan, on which Pitt and Grenville insisted, perhaps with undue rigour. Distrust of Prussia paralysed the Court of Vienna, and some time elapsed before it came to terms with Russia. But in the midst of the haggling came news which brought new vigour to the old monarchies.

On 1st August 1798 Nelson destroyed the French fleet in

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[1] "Dropmore P.," iv, 166, 172; "F. O.," Austria, 51. Grenville to Eden, 20th April.

Aboukir Bay; and thus, at one blow, naval supremacy in the Mediterranean passed from the tricolour to the Union Jack. This momentous change resulted primarily from the bold resolve of Pitt to encounter even a French descent on our coasts, provided that he could strike at France in the Mediterranean. Thus he exchanged the defensive for the offensive in a way no less bewildering to the French than reassuring to friendly Powers; and it is noteworthy that he adopted the same course in 1805, in sending Craig's expedition into that sea, thereby replacing Addington's tame acceptance of events by a vigorous policy which heartened Austria and Naples for the struggle against Napoleon. On both occasions he ran great risks, but his audacity proved to be the highest prudence. The results of the Battle of the Nile were immeasurably great. Bonaparte and his 30,000 veterans were cooped up in Egypt. The Maltese rose against the French garrison of Valetta two days after the arrival of the glad tidings from the Nile. At Naples the news aroused a delirium of joy, and filled Queen Maria Carolina with a resolve to drive the French force from the Roman States.

To Pitt also the news of Nelson's triumph brought intense relief. The disappearance of Bonaparte's armada after the capture of Malta had caused much concern. True, Naples, which was thought to be his objective, was safe; but Ireland and Portugal were deemed in jeopardy. No one at Whitehall anticipated the seizure of Malta and Egypt, still less the emergence of plans for a French conquest of India. A tone of anxiety pervades Pitt's letter of 22nd August to his mother: "The account of Bonaparte's arrival at Alexandria is, I am afraid, true; but it gives us no particulars, and leaves us in entire suspense as to Nelson."[1] All the greater, then, was the relief on 2nd October, when tidings of Aboukir at last arrived.

Further, there were signs of a Russo-French war. The romantic nature of the Czar was fired by the hope of acquiring Malta. At Ancona, early in 1797, Bonaparte had intercepted a Russian envoy bearing offers of alliance to the Knights of the Order of St. John; and their expulsion by the French at Midsummer 1798 seemed to Paul a personal affront. Some of the Knights proceeded to St. Petersburg and claimed his protection. The affairs of the Order became his most cherished concern; and on 24th July Sir

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[1] The Earl of Crawford's MSS.

Charles Whitworth, British ambassador at that Court, reported that Russia would now become a principal in the war against France, her aim being the re-establishment of peace on safe and honourable terms, but not the restoration of the French monarchy, on which Catharine had insisted. With this declaration the British and Austrian Cabinets were in full accord; and thus at last there was a hope of framing a compact Coalition. Fortunate was it that Bonaparte's seizure of Malta incensed Paul against France; for, early in August, the Swiss thinker, Laharpe, tutor of the future Czar Alexander I, brought tempting offers from Paris, with a view to the partition of the Turkish Empire.[1] That glittering prize was finally to captivate the fancy of Paul; but for the present he spurned the offer as degrading.

Nevertheless, the news of Aboukir did not wholly please him. For, while rejoicing at the discomfiture of the French atheists, he saw in Nelson's victory a sign of England's appropriation of Malta. In truth, that island now became the central knot of far-reaching complications. Formerly the bulwark of Christendom against the infidels, it now sundered European States.[2] So doubtful was the attitude of Paul and Francis that Pitt, in October 1798, twice wrote despondingly as to any definite decision on their part. All that was clear was their inordinate appetite for subsidies. These he of course withheld, knowing full well that neither would Paul tolerate for long the presence of the French at Malta, nor Francis their occupation of Switzerland. In any case he resolved not to give more than £2,000,000 to the two Empires for the year 1799.[3] For the time his hope lay only in the exertions of England, Europe being meantime "left to its fate." In order to humour the Czar, who was about to become Grand Master of the Knights of St. John, Grenville, on 23rd November, wrote to assure his Government that England renounced all aims of conquest in the Adriatic, or of the possession of Malta.

At the close of the year Pitt proudly displayed the inexhaustible resources of Great Britain. His Budget speech of 3rd December 1798 marks an epoch in economic history, alike for the boldness of the underlying conception and the statesmanlike assessment of the national resources. Well might Mallet du Pan declare that the speech surpassed all previous efforts in its illuminating exposition of a nation's finance. As appeared in our survey of the Budget of 1797, Pitt then sought to meet the year's expenses within the year. To a generation accustomed to shift present burdens on to its successors the proposal seemed Quixotic; and Fox blamed him for not adopting this device. Pitt held to his plan, and outlined a ten per cent. tax upon income. Having failed to gain the requisite tenth by means of the Assessed Taxes, he proposed to raise it by methods which even the shirkers could with difficulty circumvent.

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[1] "F. O.," Russia, 40. Whitworth to Grenville, 6th August 1798.

[2] See my Introduction to "The History of Malta, 1798-1815," by the late W. Hardman.

[3] "Dropmore P.," iv, 344, 355.

In order to lay a first rough actuarial basis for his Income Tax, he made a careful study of the nation's resources in the autumn of 1798. The results he summarized in an interesting statement. There were available at that time only rough estimates, even as to the area of cultivated land and its average rental. Relying upon Davenant, King, Adam Smith, Arthur Young, and Middleton, he estimated the area at 40,000,000 acres, and the average rental at 15*s.* an acre. He prudently fixed the taxable value at 12*s.* 6*d.* an acre. The yearly produce of mines, timber, and canal shares he assessed at £3,000,000. He reckoned house rent at double that sum, and the earnings of the legal profession at one half of it. Half a million he deemed well within the total of doctors' fees. He assessed the incomes derived from the British West Indies at £4,000,000, and those from the rest of the world at £1,000,000, a highly suggestive estimate. Tithes were reckoned at £4,000,000; annuities from the public funds at £12,000,000; the same sum for profits derived from foreign commerce; and £28,000,000 for the profits of internal trade, whether wholesale or retail. Fixing the rental of land at £6,000,000, he computed the total national income as £102,000,000, which should therefore yield not less than £10,000,000 a year. He proposed to safeguard the collection by imposing an oath at the declaration of income, and enjoining absolute secrecy on the Crown commissioners. The new tax, beginning from April 1799, would take the place of the Assessed Taxes. As will appear in a later chapter, the new impost did not yield the amount which Pitt expected; but the failure was probably due to defects in the methods of collection. Pitt further proposed to set aside £1,200,000 for the Sinking Fund.

His purpose in making this prodigious effort was to inspirit other nations to similar patriotic exertions. He pointed out with pride that after nearly six years of war British exports and imports exceeded those of any year of peace. Thus, far from declining in strength and prowess, as croakers averred, England had never shone so transcendently in the arts of peace and the exploits of war, a prodigality of power which presaged the vindication of her own rights and of the liberties of Europe.

What was the new Europe which Pitt sought to call to being? The question is of deep interest, not only as a psychological study, but as revealing glimpses of British policy in the years 1814-15. The old order having been rudely shaken in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Italy, Pitt sought to effect a compromise between the claims of tradition and those of expediency. It being of paramount importance to safeguard Europe against France, Pitt and Grenville insisted on the limitation of that Power within its old boundaries, and the complete independence of Switzerland and Holland. That of the Kingdom of Sardinia afterwards figured in their stipulations. But one significant change now appears. The restoration of Austrian rule at Brussels being impracticable, it was suggested that the Belgic Provinces should go to the Prince of Orange when restored to his rights at The Hague. In the desperate crisis of 1805, as we shall see, Pitt sought to allure Prussia by offering Belgium to her; but that was a passing thought soon given up. The other solution of the Netherlands Question finally prevailed, thanks to the efforts of Pitt's pupil, Castlereagh, in 1814. The Foreign Office did not as yet aim at the retention of the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon as a set off to British efforts for the Dutch and their acquisition of Belgium; but this thought was already taking shape. The barrier against French aggressions in the south-east was to be found in the reconstituted Kingdom of Sardinia, the House of Savoy rendering in that quarter services similar to the House of Orange in Flanders and Brabant. In other respects the British Cabinet favoured Austria's plans of aggrandisement in Italy as enhancing her power in a sphere which could not arouse the jealousy of Prussia. The aims of Berlin not being known, except that the restoration of the House of Orange was desired, Pitt and Grenville remained silent on that topic.[1]

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[1] See Rose, "Napoleonic Studies," 54-8, for this despatch of 16th November 1798.

The question whether the peoples concerned would submit to this under-girding of the European fabric did not trouble them. They saw only the statics of territories; they had no conception of the dynamics of nations. A future in which Nationality, triumphant in Italy and Germany, would bring about a Balance of Power far more solid than any which their flying buttresses could assure, was of course entirely hidden from them. But they failed to read the signs of the times. The last despairing efforts of the Poles, and the *levée en masse* of the French people, now systematized in the Conscription Law of 5th September 1798, did not open their eyes to the future. For they were essentially men of the Eighteenth Century; and herein lay the chief cause of their failure against Revolutionary France. They dealt with lands as with blocks. She infused new energy into peoples.

Meanwhile the return of Nelson to the Neapolitan coast intoxicated that Court with joy. Queen Maria Carolina, ever the moving spirit at Naples, now laid her plans for the expulsion of the French from Italy. Trusting to her influence over her son-in-law, Francis II, and to a defensive compact which the Courts of Vienna and Naples had framed on 20th May 1798, she sought to incite him to take the offensive. Her close friendship with Lady Hamilton, wife of the British ambassador at Naples, also enabled her to gain complete ascendancy over Nelson, who, with his usual hatred of "the French villains," counselled open and immediate war. For abetting this design, Sir William Hamilton received a sharp rebuke from Downing Street. Francis II and Thugut were even more annoyed. They repulsed the Neapolitan emissary who begged for help, and roundly accused the Pitt Ministry of inciting Naples to war in order to drag in Austria. Their anger was not appeased by the successes of the Neapolitans near Rome, which the French evacuated on 29th November. The counter-stroke soon fell. The French, rallying in force, pushed the Bourbon columns southwards; and the early days of 1799 witnessed in swift succession the surrender of Naples, the flight of its Court and the Hamiltons to Palermo on Nelson's fleet, the foundation of the Parthenopean Republic, and the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius in sign of divine benediction on the new *régime*.[1]

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[1] For a fuller account see "Camb. Mod. Hist." viii, ch. xxi, by the present writer.

Nevertheless, Nelson and the royal fugitives had set in motion forces which elsewhere made for triumph. Paul, re-assured as to England's desire to re-establish the Order of St. John at Malta, entered into an alliance with her on 29th December 1798, whereby the two Powers agreed to reduce France within her old boundaries, Russia furnishing to England an army of 45,000 men, mainly with a view to the support of Prussia, on condition of receiving £75,000 per month and three months' subsidies in advance. She also promised to send 3,000 men to help in the siege of the French garrison at Malta and others to assist England in the defence of the Neapolitan lands. Austria, resentful towards Pitt and fearful of Prussia's designs, still held back, though the events in Italy, especially the dethronement of Charles Emmanuel IV of the House of Savoy by the French should have spurred her to action. Probably she waited until the needs of England and Russia should enable her to dictate her terms. The cupidity of Thugut had been whetted by Pitt's speech as to the wealth of England; and the efforts of Cobenzl at St. Petersburg led Whitworth to sign a compact on terms so onerous to the British Treasury as to draw on him a sharp disclaimer and reprimand from London.[1] So matters dragged on far into the year 1799, when plans for the ensuing campaign ought to have been matured.

Still more luckless were the dealings of the British Cabinet with Prussia. In the hope of winning over Frederick William III, Grenville in November 1798 despatched his brother Thomas on a mission to Berlin. His journey thither was one of the longest and most eventful on record. At Yarmouth he was detained by easterly gales; and when at last the packet boat made the mouth of the Elbe it was wrecked. The passengers and crew succeeded in making their way to shore over the pack-ice, Grenville saving his papers, except the "full-power" needful for signing a treaty. He reached Cuxhaven in great exhaustion; and arrived at Berlin on 17th March, only to find that the French by daring and intrigue had cowed the North German States into subservience. The terrible winter of 1798-9 largely accounts for the delays which ruined the subsequent campaign. Whitworth remained long without news from Downing Street; and at last, on 12th February, announced that he had received nine posts at once. Meanwhile France, controlling all the coasts from Bremen to Genoa, not only excluded British messengers, but carried on her diplomatic bargaining in Germany without let or hindrance. For all his trouble, Thomas Grenville could get no firm footing amidst the shifting sands of Prussian diplomacy. So nervous were the Austrian Ministers as to Prussia's future conduct that they seemed about to come to terms with France and join in the plunder of the smaller German States. This might have been the upshot had not French armies crossed the Rhine (1st March 1799), and shortly afterwards invaded the Grisons Canton.[1] Goaded to action, Francis II declared war eleven days later. On 28th April Austrian hussars seized the French envoys withdrawing from Rastatt, murdering two of the four and seizing the papers of all.

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[1] "F. O.," Russia, 42. Despatches of 2nd, 8th and 25th January 1799.

Thus began the war of the Second Coalition. Bonaparte's seizure of Malta and Egypt without a declaration of war, and the unbearable aggressions of the French in Switzerland, Italy, and on the Rhine, stirred to action States which the diplomatic efforts of Pitt and Grenville had left unmoved. For none of the wars of that period was France so largely responsible. Even now, when the inroad of the French into Germany threatened the ascendancy of Prussia, Frederick William declined to join the Allies; and his unstatesmanlike refusal thwarted the plans of Pitt for the march of the subsidized Muscovite force through Prussia for the recovery of Holland.

Another essential point was Switzerland. Like a bastion frowning over converging valleys, that Alpine tract dominates the basins of the Po, the Inn, the Upper Rhine, and the Upper Rhone. He who holds it, if strong and resolute, can determine the fortunes of North Italy, Eastern France, South Germany, and the West of the Hapsburg domains. Further, by closing the passes over the Alps he can derange the commerce of Europe; and the sturdy mountaineers will either overbear the plain-dwellers, or will serve as mercenaries in their forces. Accordingly Switzerland, like her Asiatic counterpart, Afghanistan, has either controlled her neighbours, or has been fought for by them. As commerce-controller, provider of troops, and warden of the passes, she holds a most important position. Fortunate it is that the Swiss have loved freedom, or money, more than dominion. For so soon as a great State possesses their land, the Balance of Power becomes a fiction.

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[1] Hüffer, "Quellen," i, 23-9.

Pitt evinced sure insight in his resolve to free the Switzers from the Jacobin yoke. To it the men of the Forest Cantons succumbed only after desperate struggles, which inspired Wordsworth with one of the noblest of his sonnets. There is no sign that Pitt set much store on winning over the public opinion of Europe by siding with the oppressed against the oppressor, as his disciple, Canning, did during the Spanish National Rising; but help from the Swiss was certainly hoped for. So early as August 1798 Pitt proposed to allot £500,000 for assistance to them, and, but for the delays at St. Petersburg and Vienna, the Allies might have rescued that brave people before it fell beneath the weight of numbers. Even in March 1799, when the rising against the French had scarcely begun, he set apart £31,000 per month for the purpose of equipping a corps of 20,000 Swiss. On 15th March, after hearing of the outbreak of war on the Rhine, Grenville urged that the Russian force subsidized by England should march towards Switzerland, now that Prussia's doubtful behaviour prevented a conquest of Holland by land. He also insisted that this addition to the allied forces destined for Switzerland must not be allowed to lessen the number of Austrians operating there.[1]

The Court of Vienna at once saw in the subsidized Russian army a tool useful for its own plans, and requested that it should serve with the Austrians in Swabia. The answer to this singular request can be imagined. For a day or two Whitworth was also disturbed by a belated effort of the French Directory to restore peace. It offered Poland to the Elector of Saxony, and Saxony to Prussia for her friendly services, Austria being led to expect Bavaria, if she would keep Russia "within her ancient limits." Whitworth mentioned this overture to Cobenzl, and saw him blush for the first time on record.[2] Probably, then, the scheme had some powerful backing; but now Austria had crossed the Rubicon.

At first all went well. The French had played a game of bluff which they could not sustain. On all sides they were worsted in a way which suggests how decisive the campaign might have been had the Allies heartily seconded the salutary plans of Pitt. Unfortunately, despite his efforts, no compact came about between Great Britain and Austria. Russia and the Hapsburg State were but loosely connected; and, owing to a long delay in the arrival of the ratification of the Anglo-Russian Treaty, Paul did not until the beginning of May send forward the subsidized army under the command of Korsakoff.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," iv, 297, 338, 505; "F. O.," Russia, 42.

[2] "F. O.," Russia, 42. Whitworth to Grenville, 29th March.

On the other hand, the auxiliary Russian force sent forward to the help of Austria had by that time helped the white-coats to win notable triumphs in North Italy. In the months of April and May, Melas and the Imperialists, powerfully backed by Suvóroff's Muscovites, carried all before them, and drove the enemy from Milan. Soon afterwards the Allies entered Turin; and only by hard fighting and heavy losses did Moreau with the chief French army cut his way through to the Genoese coast. Meanwhile General Macdonald, retiring with a French corps from Naples, left that city to the vengeance of Nelson and Maria Carolina with results that are notorious. The French general made a brave stand in North Italy, only to fall before the onsets of the Allies at the Trebbia (17th-19th June). He, too, barely escaped to Genoa, where the relics of the two French armies faced about. These successes aroused the highest hopes at Westminster. Canning, who resigned his Under-Secretaryship of Foreign Affairs in March 1799, wrote that he cared not whether the Austrians were beaten; for their failure would serve as a good example to Europe. But in June, after their brilliant successes, he expressed a confident hope of the collapse of "the monstrous fabrick of crimes and cruelties and abominations" known as French policy; he added that Prussia could not be so stupid as to hold aloof from the Coalition; and that Pitt, again vigorous in mind and body, would carry through the war to the end.

But now in the train of victory there appeared its parasite, discord. The re-conquest of Italy was so brilliant and easy as to arouse disputes about the spoils; and when the Imperialists began to treat Suvóroff and his heroes cavalierly, the feud became acute. His complaints to his Sovereign that the Austrians thwarted him at every turn threw the irascible Czar into a rage, and he inveighed against the insolence of the Court of Vienna and its minions. Finally, in order to end these disputes, the British Ministry proposed the departure of Suvóroff to Switzerland in order to take command of Korsakoff's subsidized force.

In the third week of June Grenville urged this plan on the Russian Court as securing concentration of force and unity of command, the result in all probability being the liberation of Switzerland, whereupon the Allies could prepare for an invasion of France on her undefended flank, Franche Comté. England (added Grenville) disapproved of the presence of "Louis XVIII" at the Russian headquarters; and if Monsieur, his brother, issued a declaration, it must be drafted with care. The need of caution appears in Monsieur's offer of pardon and clemency to the misguided French, provided that they joined his standard.[1]

The Allies, it will be seen, built their hopes on a revolt of the royalists of the East of France. In fact, widespread risings were expected. Bordeaux had been the centre of a conspiracy for leaguing together the malcontents of la Vendée with those of the South, these again being in touch with the royalists of the Lyonnais and Franche Comté. Wickham, who was sent as British agent to Switzerland in June 1799, opened up an extensive correspondence which promised to lead to a formidable revolt whenever the Allies invaded Franche Comté and Nice. The malcontents had as leaders Generals Précy, Pichegru, and Willot. In due course the Comte d'Artois ("Monsieur") was to appear and put himself at their head. Accordingly, in August 1799, he left Holyrood, came to London, and dined at Grenville's house with him and Pitt. The Prime Minister afterwards paid him a private visit: but the details of their conference are not known. It is certain, however, that the Cabinet accorded large sums of money to Wickham for use in the East of France. Even after the failure in Switzerland, he pressed for the payment of £365,000 in order to maintain the royalist movement.[2]

Pitt, then, was bent on using all possible means for humbling France; and, in view of her disasters in the field, the discontent at home, and the absence of Bonaparte's army in Egypt, the triumph of the Allies seemed to depend solely on their unanimity. Much can be said in favour of the British plan of uniting the two Russian armies in Switzerland to act with that of the Archduke Charles, in order to strike at Franche Comté in overwhelming force, while the Austrians in Italy invaded Nice. If all the moves had taken place betimes, formidable forces would have been massed for an attack upon the weakest parts of the French frontier. The Czar agreed to the plan on 9th July; but the Emperor Francis withheld his sanction for a suspiciously long time. Here again, as in 1794-6, the men of the pen interfered with the men of the sword. Immersed in plans for a vast extension of Austria's domains in Italy, Thugut turned a deaf ear to the demands of Russia and England for the restoration of the House of Savoy to the throne of Turin. He declared that, as Austria had recovered the continental domains of that dynasty, she could therefore dispose of them. It soon appeared that she sought to appropriate Piedmont, as well as Venetia, Lombardy, Parma, Modena, and the northern part of the Papal States in place of her troublesome Belgic domains, thus liberally fulfilling Pitt's suggestion that her chief gains should be on the side of Italy.

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[1] "F. O.," Russia, 43. Grenville to Whitworth, 23rd June.

[2] G. Caudrillier, "L'Association royaliste . . . et la Conspiration anglaise en France" (Paris, 1908); Wickham, "Corresp.," ii, *passim.*

On this question Pitt and Grenville differed. The latter, sympathizing with Russia, strongly objected to Austria annexing Piedmont. Pitt, however, maintained that such an acquisition would not resemble the partition of Poland or of Venetia; for Charles Emmanuel had lost his lands through his own weakness, and now did nothing towards recovering them. Further, it was to the advantage of Europe that the rescuing Power, Austria, should hold them as a barrier against France. If the Czar Paul could not be induced to take this view we might leave the two Empires to settle the matter; but, at present this solution offered the best chance of arriving at a compact with Austria so much to be desired. Thus, in order to strengthen the Barrier System against France, Pitt was prepared to sacrifice legal rights to expediency, while Grenville upheld the claims of justice.

Limits of space preclude an investigation of the causes of the humiliating failure of the campaign in Switzerland. Suffice it to say that, when Korsakoff's army finally entered the north-east of Switzerland, the Archduke Charles was compelled by imperious mandates from Vienna to withdraw into Swabia. He foresaw disaster; and it soon came. While Suvóroff's army was toiling down the northern defiles of the St. Gotthard, Masséna, after receiving strong reinforcements, overwhelmed Korsakoff at Zurich (25th-26th September). That Pitt expected defeat after the withdrawal of the Archduke Charles appears from his letter to Windham:

Downing Street, 30*th August* 1799.[1]

I should gladly accept your proposal to join the water-party today, but I came to town to meet Lord Grenville; and, having seen him, I am preparing to return part of the way to Walmer in the course of the evening. I was brought to town by the vexatious accounts from Vienna, which give too great a chance of our being disappointed in our best hopes by the blind and perverse selfishness of Austria's counsels.

Grenville was equally indignant and accused Austria of treachery.[2] Much can be said in support of that charge. Whatever may have been her motive, her conduct ruined the campaign. South-east of Zurich, Soult routed Hotze's Austrian corps, which might have linked the movements of Suvóroff with those of Korsakoff, and Suvóroff on arriving at Altorff found no other course practicable than to strike away eastwards over the Panixer Pass to Coire in the Grisons. There he arrived after severe hardships on 8th October, and swore never again to act with the Austrians. Paul, on hearing these dire tidings, registered the same vow, and informed the Viennese Court that thenceforth he separated his interests entirely from hers. Thus was it that Pitt's plans miscarried. Thus was it that British subsidies were flung away into the limbo strewn with tokens of Hapsburg fatuity.

The Anglo-Russian effort against the Batavian Republic is often referred to as if it were the principal event of the year 1799. On the contrary, it was little more than a diversion intended to help the chief enterprise in Switzerland and Franche Comté. The Czar Paul and Pitt probably did not intend to hold the Dutch Provinces unless the Allies pressed France hard on the Swiss frontier and the Orange party rose in force. If these contingencies held good, then Holland might be held as far as the River Waal. If not, then the effort must be temporary. Even so, its advantages were great. The seizure of the Dutch fleet at the Texel and Helder would end all chance of invasion from that quarter. Fears of such an attempt had prompted a counter-stroke dealt by General Coote's force in the spring of 1798 at the sluice-gates near Ostend. Its surrender under untoward circumstances was, perhaps, nearly counterbalanced by the destruction of canal works necessary for the assembly of the flat-bottomed boats at Ostend.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 37844.

[2] "Dropmore P.," v, 400. I propose to examine this campaign in "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters."

For a brief space the doubtful attitude of Prussia led Pitt and Grenville to concert a larger scheme. They hoped to form a great array of Prussians, Russians, Britons, and Hanoverians which would sweep the French out of Holland; but obviously such a plan depended on the support of the Berlin Cabinet. If it were hostile, or even unfriendly, no force could advance through Hanover for the delivery of Holland; for it would be at the mercy of Prussia. In order to bring her into the league, Pitt and Grenville held out the promise of gains near the Dutch frontier; but she held coyly aloof, doubtless from a conviction that Austria would oppose her aggrandisement. So at least Thugut declared to Eden on his departure from Vienna. Well might his successor, Lord Minto, remark that the Allies spent as much time in watching each other's moves as those of the enemy.

Prussia being immovable, England and Russia laid their plans for a naval expedition to Holland. By a Convention signed at midsummer 1799 at St. Petersburg, Russia agreed to send a squadron of 11 ships, convoying an expeditionary force of 17,500 men to the Dutch coast, England paying £44,000 per month for their services after embarkation. The Czar hoped that England would send some 6,000 men. The help of 8,000 Swedes was also expected; but the King of Sweden, annoyed at England's seizure of Swedish merchantmen, refused all assistance. For a time Pitt desired both to attack the Island of Voorn below Rotterdam, and to effect a landing in the estuary of the Ems, provided that 25,000 British, 18,000 Russians, and 8,000 Swedes were available. Here, as so often, Pitt's hopes outran the actuality. Windham believed that he wished to conquer Flanders. But Windham's moods were so various and perverse that he can scarcely be trusted. In his view every effort not directed towards Brittany was wasted; and certainly feints against the coasts of Brittany and Spain promised to further the Dutch expedition.[1]

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[1] "F. O.," Russia, 43. Whitworth to Grenville, 23rd June 1799; "Dropmore P.," v, 133, 259; Windham, "Diary," 411. On 22nd July Windham urged Pitt to send a force to help the Bretons rather than to Holland. "If we succeed in France, Holland falls of course, but not *vice versa*" (Pitt MSS., 190).

Early in August Pitt and his colleagues finally resolved to send the expedition to the Dutch coast; but they had not decided as to the length or extent of the occupation. So, at least, it appears from a letter of Pitt to Sir Charles Grey:

> Downing Street, *Aug.* 23, 1799.[1]
>
> You will not wonder that the circumstances of the present moment have strongly recalled to Mr. Dundas's mind and mine the conversations which we have at different times had with you respecting the possibility of a successful stroke against Brest. The assemblage of the combined fleets[2] in that port renders such an object more tempting than ever. We have a prospect, if the expedition in Holland should terminate speedily, of having a large army of 30,000 men at least, and a large body of marines, with any number of sail-of-the-line that may be thought necessary, applicable to such a service by the month of October; and if the Allies continue to push their operations on the other side of France, the bulk of the French force will find sufficient occupation at a distance from their coast. In all these respects the time seems as favourable as it can ever be expected to be to such an enterprise; and if it is to be undertaken, we shall derive the greatest confidence of success from seeing the execution of it placed in your hands. Many circumstances may undoubtedly arise in the course of the next six weeks which may oblige us to abandon the idea. . . .

This letter proves that Pitt did not expect a prolonged occupation of Holland, at least by British troops; but the notions of Ministers on this topic were singularly hazy. All things considered, the expedition at first fared well. Sir Ralph Abercromby, the leader of the first detachment of some 12,000 British troops, effected a landing near the forts at the Helder, and on 27th August speedily captured them. Three days later Admiral Mitchell captured a squadron of 10 sail-of-the-line and several frigates anchored behind the Texel. Pitt was elated by these successes, and wrote from Walmer Castle on 5th September: "We are impatiently waiting till this east wind brings our transports in sight to carry the remainder of our troops, in order to compleat speedily what has been so gloriously begun." He adds that in a short autumn session he hopes speedily to pass by acclamation a Bill ensuring the doubling of the regular army by another levy from the militia.[1] Other letters bespeak his anxiety as to the safety of his brother, the Earl of Chatham, who served on the Council of War directing the operations of the Duke of York.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

[2] That of Bruix, which after entering the Mediterranean, returned to Brest on 13th August along with the Spanish fleet.

Abercromby's first successes were for a time maintained. At dawn of 10th September the British force beat off a sharp attack by Vandamme at the Zuype Canal on the way southwards to Alkmaar. Three days later the Duke of York arrived and took the command, including that of a Russian corps under General Hermann. Moving forwards with some 30,000 men, the Duke attacked a Franco-Dutch force somewhat inferior in numbers but very strongly posted at and around the village of Bergen. The onset failed, mainly owing to the fierce but premature and disorderly onset of the Russians on the right wing, which ended in a rout. Abercromby's flanking movement came too late to restore the fight, which cost the British 1,000 men and the Russians more than double as many (19th September). Hermann was taken prisoner.[2]

On 2nd October the Allies compelled the enemy to retreat from Bergen; but the success was of little service. The defenders, now strongly reinforced, held several good positions between Alkmaar and Amsterdam. Meanwhile the Orange party did not stir. Torrents of rain day after day impaired the health of the troops and filled the dykes. An advance being impossible in these circumstances, the Duke of York retreated to the line of the Zuype (8th to 9th October). There he could have held his own; but, in view of the disasters in Switzerland, Ministers decided to evacuate Holland (15th October). Accordingly, by the Convention of Alkmaar, on the 18th, the Duke of York agreed to evacuate the Dutch Netherlands by the end of November, 8,000 of the prisoners of war then in England being restored. Most questionable was the decision of Ministers to evacuate the Helder and the Texel. Grenville desired to hold those posts as bases for a second attempt in 1800; but this was not done. The only result, then, was the capture of the Dutch fleet, a prize gained without loss by the end of September.

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[1] The Earl of Crawford's MSS.

[2] Fortescue, iv, 662, 673-6; Bunbury, "Narrative of the War (1799-1810)," 50. Hermann wrote to the Emperor blaming the British for not supporting his advance ("Dropmore P.," v, 425); but on 10th October Paul dismissed him from the Russian service ("F. O.," Russia, 44).

The censures bestowed on this undertaking are very natural. Success was scarcely possible in the narrow, marshy strip of land north of Amsterdam. In such a district victory must be costly, while defeat spelt disaster. The whole enterprise was unwarrantable, unless the Orange party was about to rise; but on this subject Ministers were deceived. The Prince of Orange and his son assured them that it was necessary even to hold back the loyalists until armed help appeared, so eager were they to expel the French.[1] Not a sign of this eagerness appeared.

Undaunted by this failure, which Sheridan wittily called nibbling at the French rind, Pitt sought to utilize the Russian force withdrawn from Holland for the projected blow at Brest. It was therefore taken to the Channel Islands, greatly to the hurt of the inhabitants. Pitt and Grenville also concerted plans with the Austrian Court, which, chastened by the disasters in Switzerland, now displayed less truculence. It agreed to repay the loan of May 1797, to restore Piedmont to the House of Savoy, and to give back to France any provinces conquered in the war, on condition of the re-establishment of monarchy. Thus, a friendly understanding was at last arrived at; and on 24th December 1799 Grenville empowered Minto to prepare a treaty, adding that on the first opportunity the French Government should be informed of this engagement.

The occasion occurred at once. Bonaparte, having become master of France by the *coup d'état* of Brumaire (10th November), wrote on Christmas Day to Francis II and George III proposing terms of peace. The statesmanlike tone of that offer has been deservedly admired; but his motives in making it do not concern us here.[2] Suffice it to say that Pitt and Thugut saw in it a clever device for sundering the Anglo-Austrian compact. As appears from a letter of Canning, Pitt looked on the new Consular Government as a make-shift. Writing early in December to Canning, Pitt stated that the new French constitution might prove to be of a moderate American kind. To this Canning answered on the 7th that it might perhaps last long enough to admit of Bonaparte sending off a courier to London and receiving the reply if he were kicked back. Or more probably, France would fall under a military despotism, "of the actual and manifest instability of which you seem to entertain no doubt." In answer to Pitt's statement "that we ought not to commit ourselves by any declaration that the restoration of royalty is the *sine qua non* condition of peace," Canning advised him to issue a declaration "that you would treat with a monarchy; that to the monarchy restored to its rightful owner you would give not only peace, but peace on the most liberal terms."

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[1] "Dropmore P.," v, 446.

[2] See Rose, "Napoleon I," 240-2.

Clearly, then, Pitt was less royalist than Canning; but he decided to repel all overtures from Paris (so he wrote to Dundas on 31st December), because the condition of France did not provide a solid security for a peace. He added that he desired "to express strongly the eagerness with which we should embrace any opening for general peace whenever such solid security should be attainable. This may, I think, be so expressed as to convey to the people of France that the shortest road to peace is by effecting the restoration of Royalty, and thereby to increase the chance of that most desirable of all issues to the war." As Grenville and Dundas concurred in this view, the Foreign Office sent off a reply stating that the usual diplomatic forms would be observed; that His Majesty sought only to maintain the rights of his subjects against a war of aggression; and that the present time was unsuitable for negotiations with persons recently placed in power by a Revolution, until they should disclaim the restless and subversive schemes which threatened the framework of society. His Majesty, however, would welcome peace when it could be attained with security, the best pledge of which would be the restoration of Royalty.

This reply ranks among the greatest mistakes of the time. It made the name of the Bourbons odious and that of Bonaparte popular throughout France; and the scornful references to the First Consul's insecurity must have re-doubled the zeal of Frenchmen for the erection of a truly national and monarchical system under his auspices. In truth, it is difficult to see why Pitt, who held out the olive-branch to the newly-established Directory in the autumn of 1795, should have repelled the proffered hand of Bonaparte. The probable explanation is that he thought more of the effect of the reply at Vienna than at Paris. On 6th January Grenville forwarded a copy to Minto, expressing also the hope that it would be regarded as a sign of the fidelity of England to the Emperor. Further, Pitt's oration on 3rd February 1800 on this topic was marked by extreme acerbity against Bonaparte. He descanted on his perfidy and rapacity at the expense of Venice and the Sultan's dominions, and deprecated a compact with "this last adventurer in the lottery of Revolutions. . . . As a sincere lover of peace," he added, "I will not sacrifice it by grasping at the shadow, when the reality is not substantially within my reach. *Cur igitur pacem nolo? Quia infida est, quia periculosa, quia esse non potest.*"[1] In reply to a verbal challenge from Tierney a fortnight later, he fired off an harangue which ranks among the ablest and most fervid of improvisations. The Whig leader having defied him to state in one sentence without *ifs* and *buts* the object of the war, Pitt flung back the retort:

> . . . I know not whether I can do it in one sentence, but in one word I can tell him that it is security; security against a danger the greatest that ever threatened the world; . . . against a danger which has been resisted by all the nations of Europe, and resisted by none with so much success as by this nation, because by none has it been resisted so uniformly and with so much energy. . . . How or where did the honourable gentleman discover that the Jacobinism of Robespierre, of Barère, of the Triumvirate, of the Five Directors, which he acknowledged to be real, has vanished and disappeared because it has all been centred and condensed into one man, who was reared and nursed in its bosom, whose celebrity was gained under its auspices, who was at once the child and champion of all its atrocities and horrors? Our security in negotiation is to be this Buonaparte, who is now the sole organ of all that was formerly dangerous and pestiferous in the Revolution. . . . *If* peace afford no prospect of security; *if* it threaten all the evils which we have been struggling to avert; *if* the prosecution of the war afford the prospect of attaining complete security; and *if* it may be prosecuted with increasing commerce, with increasing means, and with increasing prosperity, except what may result from the visitations of the seasons then I say it is prudent in us not to negotiate at the present moment. These are my *buts* and my *ifs*. This is my plea, and on no other do I wish to be tried by God and my country.

One who heard that spirited retort left on record the profound impression which it produced on the House.[2]

Seeing that Bonaparte was then known merely as an able *condottiere*, not as the re-organizer of French society, Pitt's haughty attitude, though deplorable, is intelligible. The prospects of the war were not unfavourable. He hoped that Austria, now about to invade Nice and Savoy, would be able by her own efforts to reduce France within her old limits, England's duty being to offer help on the Riviera, to make a dash at Brest, and to seize Belleisle as a base of supplies for the Breton royalists, now once more in revolt. It is significant that Dundas wrote to Pitt on 4th January expressing his belief that Bonaparte must be serious in his desire for peace because he had no other game to play.[1]

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[1] Cicero, Seventh Philippic, ch. iii.

[2] The father of the present Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. See his work, "Ten Great and Good Men," 49

Many influences conspired to mar these hopes. The enterprises against Brest and Belleisle proved to be impracticable, and a landing at Quiberon failed because the Breton rising occurred too soon. The royalists of Provence did not rise at all. An attempt by Sir James Pulteney and a small force upon Ferrol was an utter failure. All the operations were paralysed by uncertainty as to the future conduct of Russia. The indignation of the Czar against Austria extended to England after the failure of the joint expedition to Holland; and his testiness increased owing to maritime disputes and the friction caused by the outrages of his troops in the Channel Islands. In the Riviera the Austrians continued their successes, and finally shut up Masséna in Genoa, where the British fleet rendered valuable service. But it is not surprising to find Grenville writing on 10th April to Dundas: "For God's sake, for your own honour, and for the cause in which we are engaged, do not let us, after having by immense exertions collected a fine army, leave it unemployed, gaping after messengers from Genoa, Augsburg, and Vienna till the moment for acting is irrecoverably passed by."

This, however, was the outcome of events. The French, acting on interior lines, and propelled by the will of Bonaparte, utterly crushed these sporadic efforts. The Royalists were quelled or pacified, the coasts were well guarded, while the First Consul, crossing the Great St. Bernard, overthrew the Austrians at Marengo (14th June). Before long Naples made peace with the conqueror. Meanwhile the Sea Power, operating on diverse coasts, delayed, but did not reverse, the progress of the French arms. British forces for a time defended Portugal and held Minorca and the citadel of Messina, but without any appreciable effect on Spain or Italy. The fleet played an important part in starving out the

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

French garrisons of Genoa and Valetta. But elsewhere the action, or inaction, of the British forces was discreditable. True, the conditions were adverse, but an army numbering more than 80,000 men, and costing nearly £10,000,000 sterling, should have accomplished something in Europe.

Only at one point did the British arms win a decisive success, The French occupation of Egypt had aroused the apprehensions of Dundas for India; and throughout the year 1800 he continued to urge an expedition to Egypt, though other Ministers inclined to put it off. Finally, when Bonaparte's triumph at Marengo shattered all hopes of an Austrian invasion of Provence, and the surrender of Valetta, early in September, set free the British squadron long blockading that port, Dundas pressed the Egyptian project in a letter to Pitt, dated Wimbledon, 19th September 1800. The gist of it is as follows:[1]

> On reconsidering the discussion on Egypt at the Cabinet meeting of yesterday, I am impressed by the danger of delaying action. The importance of expelling the French from Egypt is obvious; for it is clear that Bonaparte will subordinate every object to the retention of that colony. The danger to India may not be immediate, but it must be faced. Besides, our sacrifice of Turkish interests to those of Austria [that is, by refusing to ratify the Franco-Turkish Convention of El Arish] may induce the Sultan to bargain with France on terms very unfavourable to us. Or, again, France and Russia may plan a partition of the Ottoman Empire. The objections, that we are pledged to do what we can for Portugal and Austria, are not vital. For Portugal is safe while the Viennese Court opposes France; and by our subsidies and naval help we have borne our fair share in the Coalition. Further efforts in that direction will be fruitless. We must now see to our own interests. By occupying all the posts of Egypt, we can coop up the French and force them to capitulate. Action must not be postponed for any consideration whatever.

The opinion of Dundas soon prevailed; for, on 6th October, Grenville wrote that the Egyptian Expedition was decided on. As is well known, the joint efforts of forces from England, India, and the Cape of Good Hope brought about the surrender of the French garrisons, and the acquisition for the British Museum of the treasures designed for the Louvre. This brilliant result was in the last instance due to Abercromby, Hutchinson, Popham, and their coadjutors. But the enterprise resulted from the untiring championship of the interests of India by Dundas. Long afterwards at Perthshire dinner-tables he used to tell with pride how George III once proposed a toast to the Minister who planned the expedition to Egypt and in doing so had the courage to oppose not only his colleagues but his King.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

As the year 1800 drew to its close, the opposition of the Baltic Powers to the British maritime code became most threatening. The questions at issue are too technical to be discussed here. Pitt and his colleagues believed the maintenance of the rights of search and of the seizure of an enemy's goods on neutral ships to be essential to the existence of England. For this view of the case much was to be said. In every war France used neutral ships in order to get supplies; and the neutrals themselves sought to filch trade from British merchants. Now, to hinder or destroy the commerce of the enemy, and to prevent neutrals from bringing naval stores to his ports, were the only means of bringing pressure from the sea upon the dominant Land Power. In a strife for life or death Pitt and his colleagues perforce made use of every weapon, even to the detriment of non-combatants. This stiff attitude, however, contrasted with that of Bonaparte, who, in July 1800 flattered the Czar by sending back Russian prisoners and by offering to cede Malta to him. Paul, not knowing that the fall of Valetta was imminent, was duped by this device; and, a few weeks later, occurred the rupture between Russia and England.

Thus, within a year, the Second Coalition against France went to pieces, and was succeeded by a league against England. Thanks to the victory of Nelson at Copenhagen and the murder of the Czar Paul in the spring of 1801, that unnatural alliance speedily collapsed. These events, however, belong to a time subsequent to Pitt's resignation of office, after the completion of the union with Ireland, to which we must now return. Enough has been said to show the statesmanlike nature of his plans for the vindication of European independence. The intrigues of Thugut, the selfish isolation of Prussia, and the mad oscillations of Paul marred those plans and left the Continent a prey to the unbridled ambition of Bonaparte, from which it was to be saved only after a decade of exhausting wars.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE UNION

I am determined not to submit to the insertion of any clause that shall make the exclusion of the Catholics a fundamental part of the Union, as I am fully convinced that, until the Catholics are admitted into a general participation of rights (which, when incorporated with the British Government, they cannot abuse) there will be no peace or safety in Ireland.—CORNWALLIS TO ROSS, 30*th September* 1798.

THE fairest method of dealing with the Act of Union of the British and Irish Parliaments seems to be, firstly, to trace the development of Pitt's thoughts on that subject; secondly, to survey the state of affairs in Ireland after the Rebellion of 1798; and thirdly, to trace the course of the negotiations whereby the new Lord Lieutenant, Cornwallis, succeeded in carrying through the measure itself.

Firstly, it is clear that Pitt had long felt the need of closer commercial ties between the two islands. As was shown in Chapter XI of the former part of this work, he sought to prepare the way for such a measure in the session of 1785. The importance which he attached to the freeing of inter-insular trade appears in a phrase of his letter of 6th January 1785 to the Duke of Rutland as to Great Britain and Ireland becoming "one country in effect, though for local concerns under distinct legislatures." This represents his first thoughts on the subject. Obviously they were then limited to a commercial union. If the two Parliaments and the two nations could have shaken off their commercial jealousies, Pitt would probably have been satisfied with fostering the prosperity of both islands, while leaving their legislative machinery intact. But, being thwarted by the stupidity of British traders and the nagging tactics adopted at Dublin, he wrote to Rutland that his plan was not discredited by failure and they must " await times and seasons for carrying it into effect."

Times and seasons brought, not peace and quiet, but the

French Revolution. With it there came an increase of racial and religious feuds, which, however, did but strengthen his conviction of the need of a closer connection between the two islands; witness his letter of 18th November 1792 to the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Westmorland:

> The idea of the present fermentation gradually bringing both parties to think of an Union with this country has long been in my mind. I hardly dare flatter myself with the hope of its taking place; but I believe it, tho' itself not easy to be accomplished, to be the only solution for other and greater difficulties. The admission of Catholics to a share of suffrage could not then be dangerous. The Protestant interest, in point of power, property and Church Establishment, would be secure because the decided majority of the supreme Legislature would necessarily be Protestant; and the great ground of argument on the part of the Catholics would be done away, as, compared with the rest of the Empire, they would become a minority. You will judge when and to whom this idea can be confided. It must certainly require great delicacy and management; but I am heartily glad that it is at least in your thoughts.[1]

These words show why Pitt allowed proposals so imperfect as the Franchise Bill of 1793 to become law. It enfranchised most of the Irish peasantry, the great majority of whom were Catholics, though men of their creed were excluded from Parliament. But he hoped in the future to supplement it by a far greater measure which would render the admission of Catholics to Parliament innocuous, namely, by the formation of a united Parliament in which they would command only a small minority of votes. Pitt's words open up a vista which receded far away amidst the smoke of war and the mirage of bigotry, and did not come into sight until the second decade of the period of peace, when Canning, Pitt's disciple, was the chief champion of the measure here first clearly outlined. Pitt, then, desired a Union as the sole means of ending commercial disputes, otherwise as insoluble as those between England and Scotland previous to the year 1707; but also for an even weightier reason, because only so could the religious discords of Irishmen be ended; only so could the chafing of the majority against the rule of a cramping caste cease. By the formation of an Imperial Parliament, the Irish Protestants would have solid guarantees against the subversion of all that they held most dear.

[1] Salomon, "Pitt," 599. See, too, the similar letter of Richmond to his sister, Lady Conolly, in June 1795 (Lecky, vii, 134).

The full realization of these aims was impossible. Early in 1793 came war with France, with its sequel, the heating of nationalist and religious feeling in Ireland; and while the officials of Dublin Castle embarked on a policy of repression, the United Irishmen looked for help to Paris. The results appeared in the Rebellion of 1798. The oft-repeated assertion that Pitt and Camden brought about the revolt in order to force on the Union is at variance with all the available evidence. They sought by all possible means to prevent a rising, which, with a reasonable amount of help from France, must have shaken the British Empire to its base. When the rebellion came and developed into a bloody religious feud, they saw that the time for a Union had come.

The best means of checking hasty generalizations is to peruse letters written at the time, before ingenious theories could be spun. Now, the definite proposal of a Union very rarely occurs before the month of June 1798. One of the first references is in a letter of the Lord Chancellor, Loughborough, to Pitt, dated 13th June 1798. After approving the appointment of Cornwallis as the best means of quelling the revolt in Ireland, he adds: "Every reasonable man in that country must feel that their preservation depends on their connection with England, and it ought [to] be their first wish to make it more entire. It would be very rash to make any such suggestion from hence: but we should be prepared to receive it and to impose the idea whenever it begins to appear in Ireland."[1]

More important, as showing the impossibility of continuing the present chaotic administration at Dublin, is the following letter from the Earl of Carlisle, formerly Lord Lieutenant, to Pitt. It is undated, but probably belongs to 2nd June 1798:[2]

> . . . It may perhaps be but a weak apology for this interruption to own I cannot help looking at that country [Ireland] with a sort of affection, like an old house which one has once inhabited, not disliking the antient arrangement of its interior, and perhaps unreasonably prejudiced against many of its modern innovations. The innovation that has long given me uneasiness, and which now seems most seriously to perplex the Irish Government, was the fatal institution of an Irish Cabinet, which has worked itself into being, considered almost as a component part of that deputed authority. A Government composed of Lords Justices,

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[1] Pitt MSS., 328.

[2] *Ibid.*, 169.

> natives of that country, as a permanent establishment, absurd as such an expedient might be, would not have at least that radical defect of authority disjoined from responsibility. We now feel all the bad effects of a power which should never have been confer'd, and which is strengthen'd from hence by many acting with you, so as to make it impossible for the Lord Lieutenant to manage with it or without it.
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> You have, in my poor judgment, an opportunity offer'd to crush at one blow this defective system. Ireland, I scruple not to say, cannot be saved if you permit an hour longer almost the military defence of that country to depend upon the tactical dictates of Chancellors, Speaker of the House of Commons, etc. I mean to speak with no disrespect of Lord Camden; I never heard anything but to his honour; but I maintain under the present circumstances the best soldier would make the best Lord-Lieutenant; one on whom no Junto there would presume to fling their shackles, and one who would cut them short if they presumed to talk of what they did not understand. With this idea, I confess, L^{d} Cornwallis naturally occurs to me. Next to this, but not so efficacious, would be sending some one equal to the military duties, freed from all control, saving that, for form's sake, good sense would acquiesce under to [*sic*] the King's Deputy. But I cannot doubt but a deeper change would be most advisable. The disaffected to our Government (and I fear it is too general) may perhaps have their degrees and divisions of animosity against it, and some possibly may be changed by a change of men more than by a professed change of measures, which perhaps they think little about. I know they are taught to believe a particular set of men are their enemies; in truth I question if, in tyrannising over and thwarting the Castle, and talking so injudiciously, they ought to be considered as our friends. . . .

Thus the man to whom in 1795 Earl Fitzwilliam poured forth his grievances against Pitt, now advised him to end the mischievous dualism at Dublin, which enabled Lords Justices and the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons to paralyse the Executive. There, as at Berlin, advisers who had great influence but no official responsibility, often intervened with disastrous results; and not until Stein took the tiller after Tilsit did the Prussian ship of State pursue a straight course. At Dublin the crisis of 1798 revealed the weakness of the Irish Executive, and naturally led to a complete break with the past.[1]

Amidst the mass of Pitt's papers relating to Ireland there is no sign of his intention to press on an Act of Union before the middle of the month of June 1798, that is, in the midst of the Rebellion. The first reference to it occurs in a memorandum endorsed by Pitt "received June 19, 1798," and obviously drawn up by Camden a few days before he resigned the Viceroyalty in favour of Cornwallis. Pitt's letter of inquiry is missing. Camden's reply is too long for quotation, but may be thus summarized:

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[1] Porritt, ii, ch. lii; Seeley, "Stein," i, 267-82.

> The plan of a Union should be detailed as far as possible before it is attempted. The King's Cabinet should be at once consulted, also leading persons in both islands. If their opinion is favourable, the measure should then be brought forward. If the Catholic claims are to be met, the advice of their leading men, as for instance Lords Fingal and Kenmare, should be sought. The legal attainments of the Irish Chancellor, the Earl of Clare, and the parliamentary and commercial connections of the Speaker, Foster, entitle their opinions to great weight. Foster may perhaps be won over by the offer of an English peerage. The Irish Bar, as also Lords Shannon and Ely, will probably oppose a Union. Some persons will object to the admission of Catholics even to the United Parliament, though that measure cannot do harm. The Scottish Catholics should have the same privileges accorded to them, and a provision should be made for the Dissenting clergy. Parliamentary Reform must be considered, but it will not be dangerous now. The French will never make peace until Great Britain is weakened. The religious difficulty of a Union will not be great, for the Protestants will always form the majority in the United Parliament. Legal expenses in the case of Irish suits will be little more than in Scottish suits. As Dublin will suffer from the removal of the Parliament, the Lord Lieutenant's Court must be kept up in great splendour, the residence of influential persons in Ireland being encouraged in every possible way. The communications between the two islands must be improved, free packet-boats being provided. In a postscript Camden adds that he hopes Cornwallis will continue the present repressive policy, which otherwise must appear unduly harsh by contrast.[1]

The most significant passages are those in which Camden refers to the plan of a Union as so unformed as to require preliminary inquiries, and in which he presumes that after the Union Dissenters and Catholics will have "the same advantages as are bestowed upon the rest of the inhabitants of the three kingdoms." Clearly, then, Pitt and Camden had come to no decision on the Union; but Camden, from what he knew of Pitt's views, believed that he favoured a broad and inclusive policy, not a Union framed on a narrowly Protestant basis. Neither of them seems to have anticipated serious resistance on the religious question, even though the King, at the time of the Fitzwilliam crisis of 1795, had declared the admission of Catholics to the Irish Parliament to be a matter which concerned his conscience, not his Cabinet.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 326. For the text see "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters."

It is also obvious that the question of the Union was forced to the front by the cumbrous dualism of the Irish Executive, which proved to be utterly unable to cope with the crisis of the Rebellion. The King, as we have seen, shrewdly suggested that Cornwallis ought to make use of the fears of Irish loyalists in order to frighten the Dublin Parliament into acquiescence in an Act of Union. The same opinion was gaining ground; but several of Pitt's supporters doubted the advisability of so far-reaching a measure. Thus, on 4th July 1798, Hatsell, Clerk of the House of Commons, wrote to Auckland that of all possible plans a Union was the worst, "full of difficulties, to be brought about by errant jobs; and, when done, not answering the purpose. You must take out the teeth, or give the Catholics sops to eat. One or other; but the half-measure won't do." Better balanced was the judgement of the Earl of Carlisle, as stated to Auckland some time in September. After asking whether the recurrence of local risings in Ireland did not prove the unwisdom of the policy of lenience pursued by Cornwallis, he added these significant words: "In this distress it is not strange that we should turn to the expedient of Union; but this is running in a dark night for a port we are little acquainted with. . . . If you did not satisfy Ireland by the measure and take off some part of those ill-disposed to England, you would only make matters worse. But in truth something must be done, or we must fight for Ireland once a week."[1]

That the activity of the rebels varied according to the prospects of aid from France was manifest. Thus, on 25th July Beresford wrote to Auckland that the people seemed tired of rebellion, which would die out unless the French landed. But on 22nd August, after the arrival of Humbert's little force in Killala Bay, he described the whole country as in revolt. The State prisoners, O'Connor, McNevin, and Addis Emmett, sent to the papers a denial of their former pacific assurances;[1] and even after the surrender of Humbert's force, Beresford wrote to Auckland on 15th September: ". . . Should the French or the Dutch get out an armament and land, there will be a very general rising. I have it from a man on whose veracity I can depend, and who was on the spot in Mayo, during the French invasion, that the Catholics of the country ran to join them with eagerness, and that they had more than they could arm; that, as they moved on, they were constantly joined; but he says the Irish behaved so ill that the French made use of discipline, which thinned their ranks; however, they had 4,000 of them when they were attacked by Colonel Vereker, and about 200 of the Limerick militia. By our late accounts there are said to be in Mayo and Roscommon 10,000 rebels up: they are destroying the country."[2] Beresford then blames the Viceroy's proclamation, offering pardon to rebels who come in within a month, and he says their leaders tell them that 20,000 French will soon land. Equally significant is the statement of George Rose in a letter of 23rd September. Referring to the fact that two French warships had got away from Brest towards the Irish coast, he writes: "If they land, the struggle may be more serious. The truth is that it will be nearly impossible to keep Ireland as a conquered country. Union is become more urgent than ever." This was also the opinion of Lord Sheffield. Writing on 29th September from Rottingdean to Auckland, he remarks on the disquieting ease with which the French squadrons reach Ireland. He has had a long argument with the Irish Judge, Sir William Downes, and proved to him the necessity of a Union with Ireland. But (he proceeds) it will never take place, if it is set about publicly.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34454.

Irish loyalists united in decrying the comparatively lenient methods of Cornwallis; but, despite the urgent advice of Camden to Pitt, the change of system met with approval at Downing Street. This is the more remarkable as letters from Dublin were full of invectives against Cornwallis. Buckingham wrote almost daily to his brother, Grenville, foretelling ruin from the weakness and vacillation of the Lord Lieutenant. Still more furious were Beresford, Cooke, and Lees. Their correspondence with Auckland, Postmaster-General at London, was so systematic as to imply design. Probably they sought to procure the dismissal of

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[1] See my article in the "Eng. Hist. Rev." for October 1910.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 34454.

Cornwallis and the nomination of Auckland in his place. There can be little doubt that Auckland lent himself to the scheme with a view to maintaining the Protestant ascendancy unimpaired; for he wrote to Beresford that public opinion in England favoured the maintenance of the existing order of things in Church and State in both kingdoms. The following extracts from the letters which he received from Cooke and Lees are typical. On 4th October Lees writes: "I am afraid Lord Cornwallis is not devil enough to deal with the devils he has to contend with in this country. . . . The profligacy of the murderous malignant disposition of Paddy soars too high for his humane and merciful principles at this crisis." Cooke was less flowery but equally emphatic: "If," he wrote on 22nd October, "your Union is to be Protestant, we have 100,000 Protestants who are connected by Orange Lodges, and they might be made a great instrument. . . . Our robberies and murders continue; and the depredations of the mountain rebels increase."[1]

Nevertheless Cornwallis held on his way. In the period 22nd August 1798 to the end of February 1799, he reprieved as many as 41 rebels out of 131 on whom sentence of death had been passed, and he commuted to banishment heavy sentences passed on 78 others. It is clear, then, that, despite the efforts of Buckingham and the officials of Dublin Castle, Pitt continued to uphold a policy of clemency. But it is equally clear that the reliance of Irish malcontents on French aid, the persistent efforts of the Brest squadron to send that aid, and the savage reprisals demanded, and when possible enforced, by the loyal minority of Irishmen, brought about a situation in which Ireland could not stand alone.[2]

Preliminary inquiries respecting the Act of Union were set on foot, and the results were summarized in Memoranda of the summer and autumn of 1798. One of them, comprised among the Pelham manuscripts, is annotated by Pitt. The compiler thus referred to the question of Catholic Emancipation: "Catholics to be eligible to all offices, civil and military, taking the present oath. Such as shall take the Oath of Supremacy in the Bill of Rights may sit in Parliament without subscribing the Abjuration. Corporation offices to be Protestant." On this Pitt wrote the following note: "The first part seems unexceptionable, and is exactly what I wish . . . but if this oath is sufficient for office, why require a different one for Parliament? And why are Corporation offices to be exclusively Protestant, when those of the State may be Catholic?"[1] Well might Pitt ask these questions, for the whole system of exclusion by religious tests was condemned so soon as admission to Parliament ceased to depend on them. Other Memoranda dealt mainly with the difficult question of compensation to the borough-holders and placemen who would suffer by the proposed change. But for the present it will be well to deal with the question of the abolition of religious tests.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 34455.

[2] *Ibid.*; "Cornwallis Corresp.," iii, 13.

The procedure of Pitt in regard to this difficult subject was eminently cautious. As was the case before dealing with the fiscal problem in 1785, so now he invited over certain leading Irishmen in order to discuss details. About the middle of October he had two interviews with the Earl of Clare, Lord Chancellor of Ireland. These important conferences took place at Holwood, where he was then occupied in marking out a new road; for his pastime every autumn was to indulge his favourite pursuit of planting trees and otherwise improving his grounds. The two ablest men in the sister kingdoms must have regarded one another with interest. They were not unlike in figure except that Clare was short. His frame was as slight as Pitt's; his features were thin and finely chiselled. Neither frame nor features bespoke the haughty spirit and dauntless will that enabled him at times to turn the current of events and overbear the decisions of Lords Lieutenant. In forcefulness and narrowness, in bravery and bigotry, he was a fit spokesman of the British garrison, which was resolved to hold every outwork of the citadel.

The particulars of their converse are unknown. Probably Clare had the advantage which a man of narrow views but expert knowledge enjoys over an antagonist who trusts in lofty principles and cherishes generous hopes. Clare, knowing his ground thoroughly, must have triumphed. Pitt did not confess his defeat. Indeed, on 16th October, he wrote reassuringly to Grenville: "I have had two very full conversations with Lord Clare. What he says is very encouraging to the great question of the Union, in which I do not think we shall have much difficulty; I mean, in proportion to the magnitude of the subject.

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[1] Lecky, viii, 328 note.

At his desire I have written to press the Speaker [Foster] to come over, which he seems to think may be of great importance." Here is Clare's version of the interviews in a letter of the same day to his fellow countryman, Castlereagh: "I have seen Mr. Pitt, the Chancellor, and the Duke of Portland, who seem to feel very sensibly the critical situation of our damnable country, and that the Union alone can save it. I should have hoped that what has passed would have opened the eyes of every man in England to the insanity of their past conduct with respect to the Papists of Ireland; but I can very plainly perceive that they were as full of their popish projects as ever. I trust, and I hope I am not deceived, that they are fairly inclined to give them up, and to bring the measure forward unencumbered with the doctrine of Emancipation. Lord Cornwallis has intimated his acquiescence in this point; Mr. Pitt is decided upon it, and I think he will keep his colleagues steady."[1]

The mention of Castlereagh seems to call for a short account of one who, after assisting in carrying the Act of Union, was destined to win a European reputation as a disciple of Pitt. Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, and second Marquis of Londonderry (1769-1822), was the son of Robert Stewart of Ballylawn in County Londonderry by his first marriage, that with the daughter of the Earl of Hertford. Educated at Armagh and at St. John's College, Cambridge, he soon returned to contest the seat of County Down with Lord Downshire, and succeeded by dint of hard work and the expenditure of £60,000. He entered the Irish Parliament as a representative of the freeholders as against the aristocracy; but the second marriage of his father (now Marquis of Londonderry) with the eldest daughter of the late Earl Camden brought the family into close connection with the second Earl, who, on becoming Lord Lieutenant in 1795, soon succeeded in detaching young Stewart from the popular party, already, from its many indiscretions, distasteful to his cool and cautious nature. Stewart had recently married Lady Emily Hobart, the daughter of the late Earl of Buckinghamshire, and became Viscount Castlereagh in October 1795. Though continuing to support the claims of the Catholics, he upheld Camden's policy of coercion; and his firm and resolute character made his support valuable in Parliament.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," iv, 344; "Castlereagh Corresp.," i, 393.

The sagacity of his advice in committee, and the straightforward boldness of his action as an administrator, are in marked contrast to his rambling and laboured speeches, in whose incongruous phrases alone there lurked signs of Hibernian humour. "The features of the clause"; "sets of circumstances coming up and circumstances going down"; "men turning their backs upon themselves"; "the constitutional principle wound up in the bowels of the monarchy"; "the Herculean labour of the honourable member, who will find himself quite disappointed when he has at last brought forth his Hercules"—such are a few of the rhetorical gems which occasionally sparkled in the dull quartz of his plentiful output. Nevertheless, so manly was his bearing, so dogged his defence, that he always gained a respectful hearing; and supporters of the Government plucked up heart when, after a display of dazzling rhetoric by Grattan or Plunket, the young aristocrat drew up his tall figure, squared his chest, flung open his coat, and plunged into the unequal contest. Courage and tenacity win their reward; and in these qualities Castlereagh had no superior. It is said that on one occasion he determined to end a fight between two mastiffs, and, though badly bitten, he effected his purpose. These virile powers marked him out for promotion; and during the illness of Pelham, Chief Secretary at Dublin, Castlereagh discharged his duties. Cornwallis urged that he should have the appointment; and to the King's initial objection that a Briton ought to hold it, Cornwallis successfully replied that Castlereagh was "so very unlike an Irishman" that the office would be safe in his hands. Castlereagh received the appointment early in November 1798. He, the first Irishman to hold it, was destined to overthrow the Irish Parliament.[1]

We must now revert to the negotiations between Pitt and Clare. It is surprising to find Clare convinced that the Prime Minister would keep faithful to the Protestant cause its unfaithful champion, Loughborough, also that Cornwallis had acquiesced in the shelving of Catholic Emancipation. Probably Clare had the faculty, not uncommon in strong-willed men, of reading his thoughts into the words of others. For Cornwallis, writing to Pitt on 8th October, just after saying farewell to Clare at Dublin, describes him as a well-intentioned man, but blind to the absolute dependence of Irish Protestants on British support and resolutely opposed to the admission of Romanists to the united Parliament. As to himself, Cornwallis pens these noble words: "I certainly wish that England could now make a Union with the Irish nation, instead of making it with a party in Ireland"; and he expresses the hope that with fair treatment the Roman Catholics will soon become loyal subjects. Writing to the Duke of Portland in the same sense, Cornwallis shows a slight diffidence in his ability to judge of the chief question at issue.

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[1] "Castlereagh Corresp.," i, 424 *et seq.*; "Cornwallis Corresp.," ii, 439-441, Brougham, "Statesmen of George III"; Lecky, viii, 311: Wilberforce ("Life," iii, 178) calls Castlereagh "a cold-blooded creature"

Probably the solution of the riddle is here to be found. It seems that the Lord Lieutenant was politely deferential to Clare; that at Holwood Clare represented him as a convert to the ultra-Protestant tenets; and that Pitt accepted the statements of the Irish Chancellor. William Elliot, Under-Secretary at War at Dublin, who saw Pitt a week later, found him disinclined to further the Catholic claims at the present juncture, though equally resolved not to bar the way for the future. Possibly the King now intervened. It is a significant fact that Clare expected to have an interview with him before returning to Ireland. If so, he must have strengthened his earlier resolve. Pitt, then, gave way on the question of the admission of Dissenters and Catholics to the Irish Parliament. But he kept open the more important question of the admission of Catholics to the United Parliament. Obviously, the latter comprised the former; and it was likely to arouse the fears of the Irish Protestants far less. On tactical grounds alone the change of procedure was desirable. It is therefore difficult to see why Elliot so deeply deplored his surrender to the ultra-Protestants. Pitt had the approval of Grenville, who, owing to the religious feuds embittered by the Rebellion, deprecated the imposition of the Catholic claims on the fiercely Protestant Assembly at Dublin.[1] Yet he warmly supported them in the United Parliament, both in 1801 and 1807.

The next of the Protestant champions whom Pitt saw was Foster, Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, whose forceful will, narrow but resolute religious beliefs, and mercantile connections gave him an influence second only to that of Clare. In the course of a long conversation with him about 15th November, Pitt found him frank in his opinions, decidedly opposed to the Union, but not so fixedly as to preclude all hope of arrangement. On this topic Pitt dilated in a "private" letter of 17th November, to Cornwallis:

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[1] "Castlereagh Corresp.," ii, 29; "Buckingham P.," ii, 411, 412.

> . . . I think I may venture to say that he [Foster] will not obstruct the measure; and I rather hope if it can be made palatable to him personally (which I believe it may) that he will give it fair support. It would, as it seems to me, be worth while for this purpose, to hold out to him the prospect of a British peerage, with (if possible) some ostensible situation, and a provision for life to which he would be naturally entitled on quitting the Chair. Beresford and Parnell do not say much on the general measure, but I think both, or at least the former against trying it, but both disposed to concur when they understand it is finally resolved on. They all seem clearly (and I believe sincerely) of opinion that it will not be wise to announce it as a decided measure from authority, till time has been given for communication to all leading individuals and for disposing the public mind. On this account we have omitted all reference to the subject in the King's Speech; and the communication may in all respects be more conveniently made by a separate message when the Irish Parliament is sitting, and it can be announced to them at the same time. In the interval previous to your Session there will, I trust, be full opportunity for communication and arrangement with individuals, on which I am inclined to believe the success of the measure will wholly depend. You will observe that in what relates to the oaths to be taken by members of the United Parliament, the plan which we have sent copies the precedent I mentioned in a former letter of the Scotch Union; and on the grounds I before mentioned, I own I think this leaves the Catholic Question on the only footing on which it can safely be placed. Mr. Elliott when he brought me your letter, stated very strongly all the arguments which he thought ought to induce us to admit the Catholics to Parliament, and office; but I confess he did not satisfy me of the practicability of such a measure at this time, or of the propriety of attempting it. With respect to a provision for the Catholic clergy, and some arrangement respecting tithes, I am happy to find an uniform opinion in favor of the proposal, among all the Irish I have seen; and I am more and more convinced that those measures, with some effectual mode to enforce the residence of *all* ranks of the Protestant clergy, offer the best chance of gradually putting an end to the evils most felt in Ireland.[1]

The suggestion that Foster's opposition might be obviated by the promise of a peerage emanated first from Camden. Its adoption by Pitt marks the first step in the by-paths of bribery on which he now entered. In this case his action is not indefensible; for the abolition of the Speakership at Dublin naturally involved some indemnity. Besides, in that Parliament no important measure passed without bribery. That eager democrat, Hamilton Rowan, foresaw in the Union "the downfall of one of the most corrupt assemblies I believe ever existed." The proprietors of the pocket-boroughs were needy and grasping, some of them living by the sale of presentation of seats. Government generally managed to control them, but only on condition of dispensing favours proportionate to the importance of the suitor and the corruptness of the occasion. As Beresford remarked with unconscious humour, the borough-mongers "cannot be expected to give up their interest for nothing; and those who bought their seats cannot be expected to give up their term for nothing." Here he expressed the general conviction of that age, which Pitt recognized in his Reform Bill of 1785 by seeking to indemnify the borough-holders of Great Britain.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 325; "Cornwallis Corresp.," ii, 441-3.

A typical specimen of the borough-owner was that "ill-tempered, violent fellow," Lord Downshire, who controlled the Crown patronage in the North by virtue of his seven borough seats. Lord Ely had six seats; and the Duke of Devonshire, and Lords Abercorn, Belmore, Clifden, Granard, and Shannon, four apiece. In the counties, Downshire, the Ponsonbys, and the Beresfords controlled about twenty seats. Camden, writing to Pitt on 11th August 1799, thus described Downshire: "He is not personally corrupt; but the larger the compensation for the boroughs is to be, the more readily will he listen to you or Lord Castlereagh."[1] Lord Longueville, a borough-owner of great influence in County Cork, wrote as follows to Pitt on 3rd December, 1798:

> . . . Long attached to you, and confirmed in that attachment for life by the direction and advice of Lord Westmorland, I have now no object to look up to, to prevent my falling a sacrifice to my political enemies, but to you. When Lord Shannon opposed your measures, I spent £30,000 of my own money to frustrate his intentions and support your measures. I shall now act by your advice and opinion on this great business of a Union with Great Britain. My friends are numerous and

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[1] Pretyman MSS

firm; they look up to you for decision on every occasion. My interest in Ireland is extensive. I wish to be a British peer before the measure of a Union takes place, or after. I wish the city of Cork to have two members, Bantry one and Mallow one.

Longueville gained his desire and the patronage of the Revenue offices in Cork City.[1] From Pitt's letter to Cornwallis it is clear that he believed that the promise of Government stipends for the Catholic clergy, and a reform in tithes would induce them to support the Union. But it seems impossible to reconcile his statement as to Beresford's opposition to the Union with the assertion of the latter, that, in an interview of 12th November, he pressed Pitt to take immediate steps to ensure the success of the measure, which otherwise would have to struggle against unfair odds at Dublin. The curious tendency of Hibernian affairs towards confusion also appears in Cornwallis's statement, on 15th November, that he had urged Pitt not to close the door to the Catholics in the United Parliament. Whereas Pitt was resolved to admit them at an early opportunity.[2]

On the various interests at stake there is in the Pretyman archives a long but undated Memorandum, with notes at the side by Pitt, or perhaps by Grenville; for their writing, when cramped, was similar. It recommends that the precedent of the Union with the Scottish Parliament shall be followed where possible; that few changes shall be made in the Irish legal system, appeals being allowed to the Irish Lord Chancellor and three chief judges, who may also deal with evidence for parliamentary and private Bills affecting Ireland. The general aim should be to lessen the expense of resort to the United Parliament for private business. Pitt here added at the side—"Particularly in divorces and exchange of lands in settlement," also in certain "private" Bills. The compiler then refers to the difficulty of assessing or equalizing the Revenues, National Debts, and the fiscal systems of the two islands, but suggests that on the last topic Pitt's Irish proposals of 1785 shall be followed. To this Pitt assents, suggesting also that the proportions of Revenue and Debt may soon be arranged provisionally, Commissioners being appointed to discuss the future and definitive quotas. Further, Pitt expresses the desire to model the election of Irish peers on that of Scottish peers. The compiler of the plan advises a delegation of 40 Irish peers, and not less than 120 Commoners to Westminster; but, as electoral changes are highly dangerous to both countries, he drafts a scheme by which either 125 or 138 Irish Commoners will sit in the United Parliament.[1]

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[1] Pretyman MSS. "Cornwallis Corresp.," iii, 3; Macdonagh, "The Viceroy's Post Bag," 19.

[2] "Beresford Corresp.," ii, 189; "Cornwallis Corresp.," ii, 436; "Castlereagh Corresp.," i, 404.

Here Pitt and his colleagues differed from their adviser. Probably they heard rumours of the fears aroused by the advent of Irish members. The repose of Lord Sheffield was troubled by thoughts of the irruption of "100 wild Irishmen"; and he deemed the arrival of 75 quite sufficient, if staid country gentlemen were not to be scared away from St. Stephen's. By way of compromise the Cabinet fixed the number at 100 on or before 25th November 1798.[2] At that date Portland also informed Cornwallis that the number of Irish Peers at Westminster must not exceed 32.

Meanwhile, the tangle at Dublin was becoming hopeless. There, as Beresford warned Pitt, the report of the proposed Union was the letting out of water. Captain Saurin, an eminent counsel who was commander of a corps of lawyers nick-named the Devil's Own, insisted on parading his battalion in order to harangue them on the insult to Ireland and the injury to their profession. His example was widely followed. On 9th December the Dublin Bar, by 168 votes to 32, protested strongly against the proposal to extinguish the Irish Parliament. Eloquent speakers like Plunket warned that body that suicide was the supreme act of cowardice, besides being *ultra vires*. The neighbouring towns and counties joined in the clamour. The somnolence of Cornwallis, his neglect to win over opponents by tact or material inducements, and the absence of any Ministerial declaration on the subject, left all initiative to the Opposition. On 24th December Cooke wrote to Auckland in these doleful terms:[3]

> . . . Our Union politics are not at present very thriving. Pamphlets are in shoals, in general against a Union; a few for it; but I do not yet see anything of superior talent and effect. The tide in Dublin is difficult

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[1] For the plan and notes see "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters."

[2] "Cornwallis Corresp.," ii, 456, 457.

[3] B.M. Add. MSS., 34455. William C. Plunket (1764-1854), born in co. Fermanagh, was called to the Irish Bar in 1787, and entered Parliament in

to stem. In the country hitherto, indifference. We have no account from the North, and that is the quarter I apprehend. The South will not be very hostile. The Bar is most impetuous and active, and I cannot be surprized at it. The Corporation have not sense to see that by an Union alone the Corporation can be preserved. Most of the best merchants are, I know, not averse. The proprietors of Dublin and the county are violent, and shopkeepers, etc. The Catholics hold back. They are on the watch to make the most of the game, and will intrigue with both parties. . . . In the North they expect the Dutch fleet. If we had a more able active conciliating Chief, we might do; but the *vis inertiae* is incredible. There is an amazing disgust among the friends of Government. The tone of loyalty is declining, for want of being cherished. Do not be surprized at a dreadful parliamentary opposition and a personal opposition.

Cooke's reference to the mediocrity of the pamphlets for the Union is a curious piece of *finesse*; for he was known to be the author of an able pamphlet, "Arguments for and against an Union between Great Britain and Ireland." In it he dilated on the benefits gained by Wales and Scotland from a Union with England. He dwelt on the recent increase of strength in France consequent on the concentration of political power at Paris, and demonstrated the unreality of the boasted independence of the Dublin Parliament, seeing that Irish enactments must be sealed by the Seal of Great Britain. After touching on the dangerous divergence of policy at Westminster and Dublin during the Regency crisis of 1789, he showed that peace and prosperity must increase under a more comprehensive system, which would both guarantee the existence of the Established Church, and accord civic recognition to Catholics. At present, said he, it would be dangerous to admit Catholics to the Irish Parliament; but in the United Parliament such a step would be practicable. This semi-official pronouncement caused a sensation, and before the end of the year twenty-four replies appeared. In one of the counterblasts the anonymous author offers "the reflections of a plain and humble mind," by stating forthwith that the policy of the British Government had been to foment discontent, to excite

1798. He speedily made his mark, and in 1803 was State Prosecutor of Emmett. In Pitt's second Administration (1804) he was Solicitor-General: he was created Baron Plunket in 1827 and was Lord Chancellor of Ireland in 1830-41. William Saurin sat in the Irish Parliament as a nominee of Lord Downshire ("Cornwallis Corresp.," iii, 212).

jealousies, to connive at insurrections, and finally to "amnestize" those rebellions, for the purpose of promoting its favourite and now avowed object of a Union.[1]

Far abler is the "Reply" to Cooke by Richard Jebb, who afterwards became a Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland. He showed that only in regard to the Regency had any serious difference arisen between the two Parliaments; he scoffed at the notion of Ireland's needs finding satisfaction at Westminster. Would Pitt, he asked, who whirled out of the Cabinet the gigantic Thurlow, ever attend to Irish affairs? Jebb then quoted with effect Clare's assertion that the Irish Parliament alone was competent to deal with the business of the island. He admitted the directing power of the British Cabinet over Ireland's concerns; but he averred that under the new system the Lord Lieutenant would be little more than a Great Contractor. As to the satisfaction to be granted to Catholics, the Under-Secretary had done well not to be too explicit, lest he should offend jealous Protestants. But, asked Jebb, would the Catholics have much influence in the United Kingdom, where they would be, not three to one as in Ireland, but three to fourteen? Nature herself had intended England and Scotland to be one country; she had proclaimed the need of some degree of independence in Ireland. Finally, he deprecated in the mouth of an official a reference to the success attending the policy of annexation pursued by France, which Pitt had always reprobated. The effect produced by these replies appears in a letter of Lees to Auckland on 29th December. Dublin, he writes, is in a frenzy against the Union. As for Cornwallis, he was as apathetic as usual: "We are asleep, while the disaffected are working amain."[2]

Not until 21st December did Pitt and his colleagues come to a final decision to press on the Act of Union at all costs. On that day he held a Cabinet meeting in Downing Street, all being present, as well as the Earl of Liverpool and Earl Camden. The following Minute of their resolution was taken by Lord Grenville.

> That the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland should be instructed to state without delay to all persons with whom he may have communication

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[1] "Strictures on a Pamphlet, etc.," 5 (Dublin, 1798).

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 34455. The term "Contractor" used above is equivalent to "Undertaker," *i.e.*, one who undertook to get business through the Irish Parliament for certain rewards (Lecky, iv, 353).

on this subject, that His Majesty's Government is decided to press the measure of an Union as essential to the well-being of both countries and particularly to the security and peace of Ireland as dependent on its connection with Great Britain: that this object will now be urged to the utmost, and will even in the case (if it should happen) of any present failure, be renewed on every occasion till it succeed; and that the conduct of individuals on this subject will be considered as the test of their disposition to support the King's Government.[1]

Portland forthwith informed the Lord-Lieutenant, Cornwallis, of the purport of this resolution. Drastic proceedings were now inevitable; for mischievous rumours were rife at Dublin that nobody would suffer for his vote against the Union.

A brief Declaration as to the essentials of the Government plan was issued at Dublin on 5th January 1799. It stated that twenty-eight temporal peers elected for life would be delegated to Westminster, and four Protestant bishops, taken in rotation. Irish peers not elected might sit for British counties and boroughs, as before. The Crown retained the right of creating Irish peers. As to the delegation of the Commons of Ireland, each county or large town now returning two members could send only one to Westminster, except Dublin and Cork, each of which would return two members. Of the 108 small boroughs, one half would return members for one Parliament, the other half for the next Parliament. In the sphere of commerce Ireland would enjoy the same advantages as Great Britain, the duties between the two islands being equalized, the linen manufacturers retaining their special privileges. The Exchequer and National Debt of each island were to continue separate, the quota paid by Ireland into the Imperial Exchequer being reserved for future consideration, it being understood that when the Irish Revenue exceeded its expenses, the excess must be applied to local purposes, the taxes producing the excess being duly modified.

Apart from the inevitable vagueness as to the proportion of Ireland's quota, the Declaration was calculated to reassure Irishmen. The borough-mongers lost only one half of their lucrative patronage. True, the change bore hard upon the 180 Irish peers, of whom only one in six would enter the House of Lords at Westminster. But commerce was certain to thrive now that the British Empire unreservedly threw open its markets to Irish products; and in the political sphere the Act of Union, by shattering the Irish pocket-borough system, assigned an influence to the larger towns such as those of Great Britain did not enjoy until the time of the Reform Bill. Nothing, it is true, was said to encourage the Catholics; but in Cooke's semi-official pamphlet they had been led to hope for justice in the United Parliament.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

The following letter of Cooke to Castlereagh (6th January) is interesting:

> We shall have difficult work; but there is no need to despair. I do not hear of anything formidable from the country. Armagh is stirred by Lord Charlemont; Louth, I suppose, by the Speaker; Lord Enniskillen will move Fermanagh; Queen's County will be against [us]. I hear Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Limerick is [*sic*] with us. Sir Edward O'Brien in Clare is against and is stirring. Derry will be quiet, if not favourable. The North is so in general at present. The sketch of terms thrown out is much relished. I cannot tell you how our numbers will stand on the 22nd. The Catholics will wait upon the question, and will not declare till they think they can act with effect. Many persons are anxious to make them part of the measure. Grattan is come. I know not yet what he is doing. I hope all friends in London will be sent over. The first burst is everything. It would be decisive if the Prince of Wales would declare publicly in favour and hoist his banner for the Union.[1]

Apart from this enigmatical reference, there were few grounds for hope. The landlords and traders of Dublin naturally opposed a measure certain to lessen the importance of that city. Trinity College, the Corporation of Dublin, and the gentry and freeholders of County Dublin all protested against Union. Equally hostile were most Irish Protestants. In their pride as a dominant Order, they scorned the thought of subordination to Great Britain. Sixteen years of almost complete legislative independence had quickened their national feelings; and many of them undoubtedly set love of country before the promptings of caste. How was it possible, they asked, that the claims of Ireland should receive due attention amidst the clash of world-wide interests at Westminster?

Doubts like these should have been set at rest. Surely Pitt missed a great opportunity in not promising the appointment of a perpetual committee at Westminster, elected by the Irish members for the consideration of their local affairs. A similar committee for Scottish business would also have been a statesmanlike proposal, in view of the increase of work certain to result from the Union. Doubtless those committees would have interfered with the functions of the Lord Lieutenant at Dublin, and the Scottish patronage controlled by Henry Dundas. But some such measure would have appeased the discontent rife in both kingdoms, and, while easing the strain on the Imperial Parliament, would have nurtured the growth of that wider patriotism which has its roots in local affections.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.; also in Pitt MSS., 327.

A survey of the facts passed under review must, I think, lead to the conclusion that the conduct of Pitt in preparing for the Act of Union was halting and ineffective. It is true that Camden had advised him to make careful preliminary inquiries; but they were not instituted until October 1798, and they dragged on to the end of the year, by which time the fear of a French invasion had subsided. There were but two satisfactory ways of carrying the Act of Union through the hostile Parliament at Dublin. In June—October, during the panic caused by the Rebellion and the French raids, Pitt might have intimated secretly though officially to the leading loyalists that Great Britain could not again pour forth her blood and treasure for an unworkable system, and that the acceptance of that help must imply acquiescence in a Union. Such a compact would of course be termed unchivalrous by the rhetoricians at St. Stephen's Green; but it would have prevented the unchivalrous conduct of many so-called loyalists, who, after triumphing by England's aid, then, relying upon that aid for the future, thwarted Pitt's remedial policy. Prudence should have enjoined the adoption of some such precaution in the case of men whose behaviour was exacting towards England and exasperating towards the majority of Irishmen. In neglecting to take it, Pitt evinced a strange lack of foresight. At this point George III showed himself the shrewder tactician; for he urged that Cornwallis must take steps to frighten the loyal minority into accepting an Act of Union.

But there was an alternative course of action. Failing to come to an understanding with the ultra-Protestant zealots of Dublin, Pitt might have elicited a strong declaration from the many Irishmen who were in favour of Union. He seems to have taken no such step. Though aware that Cornwallis was in civil affairs a figure-head, he neglected to send over a spokesman capable of giving a decided lead. In the ensuing debates at Dublin, Castlereagh showed the toughness, energy, and resourcefulness which, despite his halting cumbrous style, made him a power in Parliament; but his youth and his stiff un-Hibernian ways told against him. Beresford was detained by illness in London; and Clare, after his return to Dublin, did strangely little for the cause. Thus, at this critical time the Unionists were without a lead and without a leader. The autumn of 1798 was frittered away in interviews in London, the purport of which ought to have clearly appeared two or three months earlier. The passive attitude and tardy action of Pitt and Portland in these critical weeks offer a strange contrast to the habits of clear thinking and forceful action characteristic of Napoleon. It is painful to compare their procedure with the action of the First Consul in speedily bringing ecclesiastical bigots and fanatical atheists to the working compromise summed up in the Concordat. In the case of the Union, the initiative, energy, and zeal, which count for much among a Celtic people, passed to the side of Pitt's opponents. Thenceforth that measure could be carried through the Irish Parliament only by coercion or bribery.

CHAPTER XIX

THE UNION (CONTINUED)

"We must consider it as a measure of great national policy, the object of which is effectually to counteract the restless machinations of an inveterate enemy, who has uniformly and anxiously endeavoured to effect a separation between the two countries."—PITT, Speech on the Union, 21*st April*, 1800.

ON 22nd January 1799 the long talked-of Act of Union was pointedly referred to in the King's Speech read out to the Irish Parliament. The Speech was adopted by the House of Lords, amendments hostile to the proposed measure being rejected by large majorities. But in the House of Commons nationalist zeal raged with ever-increasing fury from dusk until the dawn of the following day. In vain had Castlereagh made liberal use of the sum of £5,000 which he begged Pitt to send over to serve as a *primum mobile* at Dublin. In vain had he "worked like a horse." The feeling against the measure was too strong to be allayed by bribery of a retail kind.

Owing to ill health Grattan was not present. Sir John Parnell, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was among the less violent opponents; but the most telling appeal was that of Plunket, an Ulsterman. With an eloquence which even won votes he denied either the right of the Government to propose such a measure or the competence of that Assembly to commit political suicide. If the Act of Union were passed, he said, no one in Ireland would obey it. Then, turning to the Speaker, he exclaimed: "You are appointed to make laws and not Legislatures. You are appointed to exercise the functions of legislators, and not to transfer them; and if you do so, your act is a dissolution of the Government." On behalf of Government Castlereagh made a well-reasoned reply; but his speech was too laboured to commend a cause which offended both the sentiments and interests of members; and the Opposition was beaten by only one vote—106 to 105. The debate was marked by curious incidents. Sir Jonah Barrington, a chronicler of these events, declared that Cooke, perturbed by the threatened defection of a member named French, whispered to Castlereagh, and then, sidling up to the erring placeman, spoke long and earnestly until smiles spread over the features of both. A little later French rose to state his regret at the opinions which he had previously expressed. The story is not convincing in the case of a building provided with committee-rooms; but there can be no doubt that bribery went on before the debate. The final voting showed that there were limits to that form of influence. Even the canvassing of Castlereagh failed to persuade members to pass sentence of political death on half of their number and of transportation on the remainder. The joy of the men of Dublin found expression in a spontaneous illumination, and the mob broke all windows which were not lit up.

On all sides the procedure of the Government met with severe censure. As usual, blame was lavished upon Cornwallis, Lord Carysfort warning Grenville that the defeat was due to the disgust of "Orangemen and exterminators" at his clemency. Buckingham, writing to Pitt on 29th January, reported that on the estimate of Archbishop Troy, nine-tenths of the Irish Catholics were for the Union: "Remember, however," he added, "that this can only be done by the removal of Lord Cornwallis and Lord Castlereagh. . . . I protest I see no salvation but in the immediate change. Send us Lord Winchilsea, or rather Lord Euston, or in short send us any one. But send us Steele as his Secretary, and with firmness the Question (and with it Ireland) will be saved. Excuse this earnestness."[1] Pitt took no notice of this advice, but continued to support Cornwallis. As for the Irish Executive, it proceeded now to the policy of official coercion recommended from Downing Street. Parnell was dismissed from the Exchequer; the Prime Serjeant was deposed, and four opponents of Union were removed from subordinate posts, among them being Foster, son of the Speaker.

So confident was Pitt of victory at Dublin that he introduced the Bill of Union at Westminster on 23rd January. The King's Speech referred to the designs of enemies and traitors to separate Ireland from Great Britain, and counselled the adoption of means for perpetuating the connection. Forthwith Sheridan moved a hostile amendment. With his wonted zeal and eloquence, he urged the inopportuneness of such a measure when 40,000 British troops were holding down Ireland, and he denied the competence either of the British or Irish Parliament to decide on it. Pitt promptly refuted Sheridan's plea by referring to the action of the English and Scottish Parliaments at the time of their Union, and he twitted him with seeking to perpetuate at Dublin a system whose injustice and cruelty he had always reprobated. Allowing that British rule in Ireland had been narrow and intolerant, Pitt foretold the advent of a far different state of things after the Union. Then, pointing to the divergence of British and Irish policy at the time of the Regency crisis he pronounced it a dangerous omen, and declared the Union to be necessary to the peace and stability of the Empire. The House agreed with him and negatived the amendment without a division.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

It is worth noting that of Sheridan's hypothetical colleagues in office under the Prince Regent in the Cabinet outlined in February 1789, not one now supported him. Fox was not present, being engrossed in Lucretius and the "Poetics" of Aristotle. He, however, informed Lord Holland that he detested the Union and all centralized Governments, his predilection being for Federalism.[1] The remark merits notice in view of the concentration of power in France, and in her vassal Republics at Rome, Milan, Genoa, and Amsterdam. That eager student of the Classics wished to dissolve the British Isles into their component parts at a time when the highly organized energy of the French race was threatening every neighbouring State. While the tricolour waved at Amsterdam, Mainz, Berne, Rome, Valetta, and Cairo, Fox thought it opportune to federalize British institutions. The means whereby Pitt sought to solidify them are open to question. But which of the two statesmen had the sounder sense?

On 31st January, after the receipt of the disappointing news from Dublin, Pitt returned to the charge. Expressing deep regret that the Irish House of Commons should have rejected the plan of a Union before it knew the details, he proceeded to describe the proposals of the Government. Firstly, he insisted that it was the concerted action of invaders from without and traitors within that made the measure necessary. He then argued that the settlement of 1782, according legislative independence to the Irish Parliament, was far from final, as appeared in the ministerial declarations of that time. Moreover, Irish Bills did not become law unless sanctioned by the King and sealed by the Great Seal of Great Britain on the advice of British Ministers, facts which implied the dependence of the Irish Parliament. Turning to the commercial issues at stake, he effectively quoted the statement of Foster to the Irish House of Commons in 1785, that they would be mad to reject the commercial proposals then offered, which, if thrown out, would not be renewed. But now, said Pitt, they are renewed in the projected Union; and Foster has used his influence to reject a measure which breaks down the fiscal barriers between the two kingdoms. After referring to the Regency Question, he pointed out the danger of France attacking the British race at its weakest point. Never would she cease to assail it until the Union was indissoluble. Commerce, he said, was the source of wealth; and the wealth needed to withstand the predatory designs of France would be enhanced by a free interchange of British and Irish products. The Union would encourage the flow into the poorer island of British capital which it so much needed. Next, adverting to the religious feuds in Ireland, he remarked on the danger of granting concessions to the Irish Catholics while Ireland remained a distinct kingdom. He then uttered these momentous words:

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[1] "Mems. of Fox," iii, 150; "Grattan Mems.," iv, 435.

> On the other hand, without anticipating the discussion, or the propriety of agitating the question, or saying how soon or how late it may be fit to discuss it, two propositions are indisputable; first, when the conduct of the Catholics shall be such as to make it safe for the Government to admit them to the participation of the privileges granted to those of the established religion, and when the temper of the times shall be favourable to such a measure—when these events take place, it is obvious that such a question may be agitated in an United Imperial Parliament with much greater safety, than it could be in a separate Legislature. In the second place, I think it certain that, even for whatever period it may be thought necessary after the Union to withhold from the Catholics the enjoyment of those advantages, many of the objections which at present arise out of their situation would be removed, if the Protestant Legislature were no longer separate and local, but general and Imperial: and the Catholics themselves would at once feel a mitigation of the most goading and irritating of their present causes of complaint.

Pitt then deprecated the effort to inflame the insular pride of Irishmen. Could Irishmen really object to unite with Britons? For it was no subordinate place that they were asked to take, but one of equality and honour. Most happily then did he quote the vow of Aeneas for an equal and lasting compact between his Trojans and the Italians:

> Non ego nec Teucris Italos parere jubebo,
> Nec nova regna peto: paribus se legibus ambae
> Invictae gentes aeterna in foedera mittant.[1]

He ended his speech by moving eight Resolutions on the question; and the House approved their introduction by 140 votes to 15. This statesmanlike survey lacked the fire and imaginative elevation of his speech on the Slave Trade in 1792. But there was little need of rhetoric and invective. Pitt's aim was to convince Ireland of the justice of his proposals. And his plea, though weak at one point, must rank among the ablest expositions of a great and complex question. How different the course of events might have been if the Commons of Ireland had first heard Pitt's proposals of Union, clearly and authoritatively set forth, not in the distorted form which rumour or malice depicted. In this respect Gladstone proved himself an abler tactician than Pitt. His Home Rule Bill of 1886 remained a secret until it was described in that masterly statement which formed a worthy retort to Pitt's oration of 31st January 1799. Pitt prepared it with great care, so Auckland avers; and, as he and Long had secured the presence of the best reporters, the text of the speech is among the most accurate that we possess for that period. He now resolved to bring forward specific Resolutions, instead of, as before, proposing merely to appoint Commissioners to consider the details of the Bill of Union. It is unfortunate that he did not take this step at first. The mistake probably resulted from his besetting sin—excess of confidence. On 26th January he expressed to Cornwallis his deep disappointment and grief at the action of the Dublin Parliament, which he ascribed to prejudice and cabal. Clearly he had underrated the force of the nationalist opposition.

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[1] Virgil, "Aen.," xii, 189-91. "As for me, I will neither bid the Italians obey the Trojans, nor do I seek a new sovereignty. Let both peoples, unsubdued, submit to an eternal compact with equal laws." The correct reading is "Nec mihi regna peto," which Pitt altered to "nova."

Meanwhile Castlereagh endeavoured to reckon the value of the pecuniary interests in Ireland opposed to the Union. In a characteristically narrow spirit he assessed the losses to borough-holders at £756,000; to controllers of counties at £224,000; to barristers at £200,000; to purchasers of parliamentary seats at £75,000; and he estimated the probable depreciation of property in Dublin at £200,000. Thus, moneyed interests worth £1,433,000 were arrayed against the Union. He proposed to whittle down these claims by raising the number of Irish members in the United Parliament either to 127 or 141. Both at Dublin and Westminster Ministers were intent on appeasing hostile interests on the easiest terms. Among Pitt's papers is a curious estimate of the opinion of the propertied classes in the counties and chief towns of Ireland. "Property" is declared to favour the Union in Antrim, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Leitrim, Londonderry, Mayo, Waterford, and Wexford. It was hostile in Carlow, Cavan, Dublin, Fermanagh, Kildare, and Louth. In the other counties it was divided on the subject. Among the towns, Cork, Galway, Lisburne, Londonderry, Waterford, and Wexford supported Union. Clonmell, Drogheda, and Dublin opposed it; while Belfast, Kilkenny, and Limerick were doubtful. Most of the Grand Juries petitioned for Union, only those of Dublin, Louth, Queen's County, and Wicklow pronouncing against it.[1] In view of the expected attempt of the Brest fleet, the Grand Jury of Cork burst into a patriotic rhapsody which must be placed on record:

March 26, 1799.[2]

. . . At the present awful moment whilst we await the threatened attempt of the enemies of religion and of man to crush us in their sacrilegious embrace; whilst their diabolical influence cherishes rebellion and promotes assassination in the land, we look back with gratitude to the timely interposition of Great Britain, which has more than once rescued us from that infidel yoke under which so great a portion of distracted Europe at this moment groans. We have still to acknowledge how necessary that interposition is to protect us from the further attempts of an unprincipled foe, . . . and to her assistance we are . . . indebted for keeping down an unnatural but wide extended rebellion within the bosom of this country. To become a constituent part of that Empire to whose protection we owe our political existence and whose constitution is the admiration of the civilized world; to participate in those resources which are inexhaustible; to become joint proprietors of that navy which is irresistible; and to share in that commerce which knows no bounds, are objects beyond which our most sanguine wishes for the wealth and prosperity of Ireland cannot possibly extend, whilst the prospect which they hold forth of terminating the jarring interests of party and reconciling the jealous distinctions of religion, promises a restoration of that tranquillity to which the country has too long been a stranger.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 196, 320.

[2] Pretyman MSS. See "Cornwallis Corresp.," iii, 125, 210, for Unionist sentiment in Cork.

This exuberant loyalty may have been heightened by the hope that Cork would reap from the Union a commercial harvest equal to that which raised Glasgow from a city of 12,700 souls before the Anglo-Scottish Union, to one of nearly 70,000 in the year 1800. But the men of Cork forgot that that marvellous increase was due to the coal, iron, and manufactures of Lanarkshire, no less than to free participation in the trade of the Empire.

The fact that Cork was then far more Unionist than Belfast is apt to perplex the reader until he realizes that Roman Catholics for the most part favoured Union, not so much from loyalty to George III, as from the conviction that only in the Imperial Parliament could they gain full religious equality. On the other hand the Presbyterians of Ulster had fewer grievances to be redressed, and were not without hope of gaining satisfaction from the Protestant Legislature at Dublin. It is certain that the Catholic Archbishops of Dublin and Tuam, besides Bishop Moylan of Cork and other prelates, used their influence on behalf of the Union. Cornwallis was known to favour the Catholic claims; and Wilberforce, writing to Pitt, says: "I have long wished to converse with you a little concerning the part proper for you to take when the Catholic Question should come before the House. I feel it due to the long friendship which has subsisted between us to state to you unreservedly my sentiments on this very important occasion, especially as I fear they are different from your own."[1] Pitt does not seem to have welcomed the suggestion couched in these magisterial terms, and, as the sequel will show, he had good grounds for concealing his hand. Only at one point did the Cabinet declare its intentions. There being some fear that the Opposition at Dublin would seek to win over the Catholics by the offer of Emancipation, the Government declared its resolve to oppose any step in this direction so long as that Parliament existed.[1]

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[1] Pitt MSS., 189.

It is well also to remember that the concession of the franchise to the bulk of the Irish peasantry in 1793, with the full approval of Pitt, enabled the Catholics to control the elections in the counties and "open" boroughs except in Ulster. Therefore, though they could not send to Parliament men of their creed, they could in many instances keep out Protestants who were inimical to their interests. In the present case, then, Catholic influence was certain to tell powerfully, though indirectly, in favour of Union. These facts explain the progress of the cause early in the year 1799. Opponents of the measure began to tremble for their seats owing to the action either of Government or of the Catholic vote. Accordingly, despite the frantic efforts of Lord Downshire and Foster, Government carried the day by 123 to 103 (15th February). Fear worked on behalf of Union. A great fleet was fitting out at Brest, the Dutch ports were alive with work, and again Ireland was believed to be the aim of the Republicans. As was the case in 1798, they encouraged numbers of Irishmen to make pikes, to muster on the hills of Cork and Wicklow, dealing murder and havoc in the plains by night. Cornwallis therefore proclaimed martial law, armed the yeomen, and sought to crush the malcontents, a proceeding which led critics to charge Government with inciting the people to outrage in order to coerce them. Those who flung out the sneer should also have proved that the naval preparations at Brest and the Texel were instigated from Downing Street in order to carry the Union.

The real feelings of Dublin officials appear in the letters of Beresford, Cooke, and Lees to Auckland. On 15th March 1799 Beresford writes: "Our business is going on smoothly in Parliament; from the day that Government took the courage [*sic*] of dividing with the Opposition, they have grown weaker and weaker every day as I foretold to you they would. The Speaker [Foster], as I hear, appears to be much softened. I am sure he sees that he has pledged himself too far, and that he cannot depend upon those who heretofore supported him: and both he and Ponsonby are conscious that the point will be carried and they, of course, left in the lurch. . . . The country is in a wretched way, organization going on everywhere; and if the French should land, I much fear that there will be very universal risings." On the subject of inter-insular trade Beresford informs Auckland on 29th March that Ireland depends almost entirely upon Great Britain and her colonies, having a balance in her favour in that trade but an adverse balance in her dealings with foreign lands. She exports 41,670,000 yards of linen to Great Britain and only 4,762,000 yards to other lands. Besides, the British trade is increasing fast, as England uses less and less foreign linen. On the morrow, Cooke declares that, if the French do not land, the Irish malcontents will settle down. Commending the policy of going slowly with the Union, he says: "By letting the subject cool, by opening its nature, tendencies, and advantages, and seeming not to press it, and by insinuating that no other course of safety to property remains, the mind begins to think seriously and faints. I think during the Vacation pains may be taken with the House of Commons so as to give us a fair majority, and if the Catholics act steadily we should be able to carry the point. I could wish that Mr. Pitt would suffer some person of ability to prepare all the necessary Bills, and to fill up every detail; so that the measure might be seen in its complete stage. I despair of this being done, tho' obviously right; for Ministers never will act till they are forced, and I do not wonder at it."[1]

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[1] "Cornwallis Corresp.," iii, 52, 54; Hunt, "Pol. Hist. of England," x, 447.

Again, all the energy was on the side of the Opposition. On 11th April Foster passed the whole subject in review in a speech of four hours' duration. In order to weaken one of the strongest of Pitt's arguments, he proposed that in case of a Regency, the Regent, who was chosen at Westminster, should necessarily be Regent at Dublin. This proposal of couse implied the dependence of the Irish Parliament on that of Great Britain; but, as invalidating one of the chief pleas for Union, Foster pressed it home. He also charged Pitt with endeavouring to wring a large sum of money every year from Ireland. The speech made a deep impression. The only way of deadening its influence and stopping the Regency Bill was to postpone it until August and summarily to close the session on 1st June. The meanness of this device is a tribute to the power of Foster and the mediocrity of the officials of Dublin Castle.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS. 35455.

Meanwhile the naval situation had cleared up, so far as concerns Ireland. On 25th April Admiral Bruix, with a powerful fleet, slipped out from Brest by night past Lord Bridport's blockading force. For some days panic reigned in London, and it is significant that Bridport took especial measures to guard the coasts of Ireland, thus enabling the French to get clear away to the Mediterranean. With bolder tactics they should have been able to reduce the new British possession, Minorca, or annihilate the small force blockading Malta. The relief felt at Dublin Castle, on hearing of Bruix' southward voyage, appears in Beresford's letter of 15th May, in which he refers to the revival of loyalty and the terrible number of hangings by courts martial: "We consider ourselves as safe from the French for this year; but I am in great anxiety for my friend St. Vincent. What steps will be taken against those damned dogs in the Mediterranean? . . I expect that the French going to the Mediterranean, instead of coming to the assistance of their friends here, will have a very great effect upon the people of this country, who, as soon as they find that they have been made fools of will endeavour to get out of the scrape they are in." On 1st June Cooke writes "secretly" to Auckland, expressing regret that Pitt ever attacked Foster, whose opposition is most weighty. The Cabinet lost the measure by want of good management in 1798: and the same is now the case. Nothing has been done to win over Lord Downshire with his eight votes, or Lords Donegal and De Clifford, who had half as many. He even asks whether Pitt will think it worth while to spend three months' work on the Union now that the French had gone to the Mediterranean.[1] The question reveals the prevalence of the belief that Pitt paid little attention to Irish affairs. Probably it arose from his stiffness of manner and his execrable habit of leaving letters unanswered. This defect had become incurable, witness the complaint of Wilberforce to Addington—"You know how difficult, I may say next to impossible, it is to extort a line from Pitt."[2]

In July the return of Bruix with the Cadiz fleet into the Atlantic renewed the fears of Irish loyalists and the hopes of the malcontents. The combined fleet managed to enter Brest on 13th August 1799; and its presence there was a continual source of unsettlement to Ireland, preparations for revolt being kept up in several parts. A large British force was therefore kept in Ireland, not for the purpose of forcing through the Union, as Pitt's enemies averred, but in order to guard against invasion and rebellion. Though reinforcements arrived, Cornwallis complained that he had not enough troops. On 24th July 1799 he informed the Duke of Portland that he had only 45,000 regular infantry, a number sufficient to preserve order but totally inadequate to repel an invasion in force. Thus the facts of the case are, that French threats to tear Ireland from Great Britain kept up the threatening ferment and necessitated the presence of a considerable military force; but they also led Pitt to insist on the Union as a means of thwarting all separatist efforts whether from without or from within. It is clear, however, that Pitt and Earl Spencer trusted to Bridport's powerful squadron to intercept any large expedition of the enemy. The blow then preparing against the Dutch was in part intended to ensure the safety of the British Isles.

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[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 35455.

[2] "Life of Wilberforce," ii, 227.

Meanwhile at Westminster the cause of the Union met with almost universal approval. The debate in the Lords on 11th April elicited admirable speeches, from Dr. Watson, the learned Bishop of Llandaff, and from Lords Auckland and Minto. Only Lords Holland, King, and Thanet protested against the measure. In the Commons, Lord Sheffield, while supporting the Union, reproved Ministers for allowing their aim to become known in Ireland several weeks before the details of their proposals were made public. The measure received warm support from Canning, who a month earlier had resigned the Under-Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs, and was now for the time merely on the India Board of Control, with a sinecure superadded. The sensitive young Irishman had found it impossible to work with the cold and austere Grenville; and his place was taken for a time by his coadjutor on the "Anti-Jacobin," Hookham Frere, to whom the Grenville yoke proved scarcely less irksome.

Canning flung himself with ardour into the struggle for the Union, and proved a match for his brilliant fellow countryman, Sheridan. He combated the notion that the Irish Parliament was unalterably opposed to the measure, and, arguing from the contemptuous manner in which the French had met our overtures for peace, he inferred their resolve to sever Ireland from the Empire. In animated style he declared that Ireland would not lose but gain in dignity by the Union, which would confer on her what she most needed, stronger and steadier government. On this occasion Sheridan did not speak, and Fox was absent. After a protest by Lord William Russell against infringing the final settlement of 1782, Pitt arose merely in order to challenge this statement and to read the letters of the Duke of Portland to Lord Shelburne of May—June 1782; they refuted Russell's contention only in so far as to show that Ministers then designed to legislate further on the subject. The Irish Parliament certainly regarded the legislative independence then granted as complete and final. The House of Commons supported Pitt by a unanimous vote.

During the summer the outlook at Dublin became somewhat brighter, as appears from the following "secret" letter of Cooke to Lord Camden. After congratulating him on receiving the Garter, he continues:

Dublin, 14 *Aug.*, 1799.

. . . I think Union gains ground. Lord Cornwallis is in earnest on the subject and feels himself committed. The Catholics have been chiefly courted by him, and he has always been of opinion that, if they would act heartily in support, the Protestants would not resist the efforts of the British Government, assisted by the population of the kingdom. I believe this position to be true. It cannot, however, be fully acted upon, in my mind, unless there be a determination to make futher concessions to that body. To such concessions I confess I do not see insuperable, tho' I do strong, objections. I think they vanish in the superior importance of the question of Union. From the present state of the country I conceive the question may be brought forward with safety. If the Catholics were steady, Dublin might be preserved quiet, tho' the Opposition would be clamorous. Our difficulties will be in Parliament. I think the Speaker will not relax. Lord Downshire, I am sorry to say, seems very hostile. Lord de Clifford is also unfriendly. Lord Donegal I hear is coming round. Could Lord Downshire and Lord de Clifford be made cordial, the Parliament would be secure. I see not any great difficulty in settling the terms except as to the representation of the Commons and compensation to the boroughs. Allowing two members for each county—which makes 64—there is no principle which can be exactly applied for classing the boroughs and selecting the great towns, and tho' it would be easy to compensate the close boroughs, it is almost

> impossible to compensate pot-walloping boroughs.[1] The difficulties here are enhanced by the consideration that in this case private not public interests are concerned. When I thus represent the probability of success, I am aware of the strange volatility of the Irish mind; and I should not be surprised at any sudden turn of the present appearances. . . .

Very interesting is the statement as to the courting of the Catholics by Cornwallis. Pitt certainly knew of these advances; for on New Year's Day 1801 Castlereagh reminded him by letter that Cornwallis did not venture to make them until the Cabinet had discussed the matter sometime in the autumn of 1799, and had come to a conclusion entirely favourable to the Catholic claims, finally assuring him that he "need not hesitate in calling forth the Catholic support in whatever degree he found it practicable to obtain it." This and other passages in Castlereagh's letter prove conclusively that not only Pitt, but the Cabinet as a whole was responsible for the procedure of Cornwallis, which ensured the more or less declared support of the Irish Catholics.[2]

The chief difficulty was with the Protestant clique which largely controlled State patronage. In the autumn Pitt had another interview with Downshire, but found him full of complaints, demanding among other things that Ireland should send at least 300 Commoners to Westminster. He departed for Dublin declaring that he would do his duty. In October the Government's cause was furthered by a state progress of Cornwallis through the North of Ireland, during which he received numerous addresses in favour of Union. At Belfast 150 of the chief citizens attended a banquet in his honour; Londonderry was enthusiastic in the cause; and it was clear that the opposition of the Protestants of the North was slackening. But, as often happened in Ireland, many Catholics now began to doubt the utility of a measure commended by their opponents. The interest which Pitt felt in this complex problem and in Cornwallis's tour appears in the following Memorandum which he wrote probably at the end of October 1799:

> The number of placemen in Ireland is 71. Of these such as hold office for life or during good behaviour, 11, and 2 holding places for pleasure, vote against. It is said 63 seats have been vacated by Govern-

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[1] These were boroughs in which all holders of tenements where a pot could be boiled had votes. See Porritt, ii, 186, 350.

[2] "Castlereagh Corresp.," iv, 8-10.

ment by a misuse of the Place Bill. This number is exaggerated; but at least 10 were vacated to serve Opposition. A charge is made against Lord Cornwallis for canvassing for declarations in favour of Union. The fact is that Lord Cornwallis, being commander-in-chief, thought it his duty to make a progress of inspection thro' the kingdom in order to examine the state of the army and to be a judge of the means of defence he could rely on. In this progress he received numerous addresses in favour of Union. A charge is made against Government of intimidation and the exertion of martial law. There was only one attempt to substantiate such a charge which was by Sir L. Parsons, which, instead of terminating in censure, produced a vote of unanimous approbation in favour of Government. There have been general charges of corruption adduced, but no proof attempted. The charge retorted by Government on Opposition for forming the most extensive subscriptions for the purpose of corruption has not been denied by them.

The last sentence refers to a curious incident. Downshire, the most influential opponent of the Union, had opened a fund for influencing members of Parliament. It reached a large amount, probably £100,000. Beresford in a letter to Auckland states that £4,000 was paid to win over a supporter of Government. Pitt, as we have seen, believed that Downshire's fund necessitated the extensive use of bribery by Government. But it is on the whole more likely that Dublin Castle opened the game by its request early in 1799, for £5,000 immediately from London. Further sums were forwarded, for on 5th April, Cooke, after interviews with Pitt and Portland, assured Castlereagh that Portland would send "the needful" to Dublin. He adds: "Pitt will contrive to let you have from £8,000 to £10,000 for five years," though this was less than Castlereagh required. After this, it is absurd to deny that Pitt used corrupt means to carry the Union. He used them because only so could he carry through that corrupt Parliament a measure entailing pecuniary loss on most of its members. Probably he disliked the work as much as Cornwallis, who longed to kick the men whom he had to conciliate.—"I despise and hate myself every hour," so Cornwallis wrote to Ross, "for engaging in such dirty work, and am supported only by the reflection that without an Union, the British Empire must be dissolved."[1]

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[1] "Cornwallis Corresp.," iii, 101, 102, 226; "Castlereagh Corresp.," iii, 260; Plowden (ii, 550), without proof, denies the existence of Downshire's fund.

The winter of 1799-1800 was marked by fierce discontent; and again, after the rise of Bonaparte to power, there were rumours of invasion which excited the peasants of South Ireland. The men of Dublin on some occasions assaulted Unionist Members of Parliament. Cornwallis, however, believed that the country as a whole favoured the cause; and Castlereagh received favourable assurances as to the attitude of the great majority of Catholics except in County Dublin.[1] Some leading Episcopalians were appeased by the insertion of a clause uniting the Protestant Churches of England and Ireland in one body. This concession did not satisfy the Orangemen, who, despite the prohibition of their Grand Lodge, clamoured against the Union, and threatened to oppose it by force.

So doubtful were the omens when Cornwallis opened the Irish Parliament on 5th February 1800, in a speech commending the present plan of unification. Castlereagh then defended the proposals and declared them to have the support of three fourths of the property there represented. After showing the need of keeping the debts of the two islands distinct, he explained that an examination of the Customs and Excise duties warranted the inference that the contribution of Ireland towards Imperial expenses should be two fifteenths of that of Great Britain. He claimed that this plan would press less heavily on Ireland than the present duty of contributing £1,000,000 to the British armaments in time of war and half that amount in peace. Further, the Union would tend to assuage religious jealousies and to consolidate the strength of the Empire. Early on the next morning the House divided—158 for and 115 against Government. This result did not wholly please Dublin Castle. Cooke wrote on the morrow to Auckland: "The activity and intimidation of Opposition, together with their subscription purse, does sad mischief. They scruple not to give from 3,000 to 4,000 guineas for a vote." Government therefore had to mourn over seven deserters.[2] Nevertheless, this division was decisive. Castlereagh rounded up his flock, and by the display of fat pasture called in some of the wanderers. Is it possible that the Opposition purse was merely the device of a skilful auctioneer, who sends in a friend to raise the bids?

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[1] "Castlereagh Corresp.," iii, 135, 226. On the proposed changes in the Catechism there is a long *précis* in the Pretyman MSS., being a summary of the correspondence of Lords Castlereagh and Hobart with Archbishop Troy and Bishop Moylan.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 35455; "Dropmore P.," vi, 121.

The triumph of Government at Dublin had its effects at Westminster. On 21st April 1800 Pitt explained the Resolutions as recently accepted by the Irish Parliament. He spoke very briefly, probably owing to ill health, which beset him through many weeks of that year.[1] He soon met a challenger. Thomas Jones dared him to combat by accusing Ministers of seeking to disfranchise Ireland by corrupt means. Foiled in argument, they now acted on the principle

> Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.

After a further display of classical knowledge, Jones declared that the introduction of 100 Irish members into that House must destroy the British constitution, which, like Damocles, would for ever be threatened with the sword of Dionysius suspended over it by a single hair.

Disregarding rhetoric and classical allusions, Pitt plunged into business. In none of his speeches is there a simpler statement of a case. He declared the Union to be absolutely necessary as a means of thwarting the machinations of an enemy ever intent on separating the two kingdoms. It would further allay the religious animosities rife in Ireland, and would conduce to her freedom and happiness. He then uttered these words: "It may be proper to leave to Parliament an opportunity of considering what may be fit to be done for His Majesty's Catholic subjects, without seeking at present any rule to govern the Protestant Establishment or to make any provision upon that subject." This statement is not wholly clear; but it and its context undoubtedly opened up a prospect of Catholic Emancipation such as Cornwallis had far more clearly outlined. The significance of Pitt's declaration will appear in the sequel.

On the subject of commerce Pitt laid down the guiding principle that after the Union all Customs barriers between the two islands ought to be swept away as completely as between England and Scotland. If at present they swerved from this grand object, it was for the sake of reaching it the more surely. In compliance with the demand of Ireland, they would allow her to maintain a protective duty of 10 per cent. on cottons and woollens, in the latter case for not more than twenty years. He then added these words: "The manufacturers of this country do not, I believe, wish for any protecting duties; all they desire is a free intercourse with all the world; and, though the want of protecting duties may occasion partial loss, they think that amply compensated by general advantage." No more statesmanlike utterance had been heard in the House of Commons. Only by degrees had Pitt worked his way to this conviction. In his early Budgets, as we saw, he clung to the system of numerous duties; but, despite the cramping influence of war, he now relied on the effects of a two-shilling Income Tax and aimed at the abolition of protective Customs dues. He was fated never to reach this ideal; but there can be no doubt that he cherished it as one of the hopes of his life.

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[1] "Castlereagh Corresp.," iii, 263, 278.

Turning next to the question of Ireland's contribution to the Imperial Exchequer, Pitt set forth his reasons for fixing it at two fifteenths of the revenue of Great Britain; but, as this decision might in the future unduly burden the smaller island, it would not be final; and he suggested that at the end of twenty years the resources of each would so far have developed as to admit of a more authoritative assessment. If, however, in the meantime the amount paid by Ireland should be in excess of what ought to be paid, the surplus should be applied either to the extinction of her Debt or to local improvements. He further expressed the hope that in course of time the Debts and the produce of taxation would be so far assimilated in the two kingdoms as to admit of the formation of one National Debt and one system of taxation. Despite the favourable nature of these proposals, Pitt encountered a spirited opposition. Grey declared the measure to be a gross violation of the rights of the Irish people. Sheridan, Dr. Laurence (the friend of Burke), and Tierney continued in the same strain; and Grey finally dared the Minister to dissolve the Irish Parliament and appeal to the people. Throwing off all signs of bodily weakness, Pitt took up the challenge. Last year, he said, when the Commons of Ireland rejected the Union, certain members applauded them. Now, when they passed it, the same members said "appeal to the people." He refused to do so, knowing well the scenes of violence and intimidation that would result from consulting primary assemblies of Irishmen. The reference to those bodies, so notorious during the French Revolution. clinched his reply;

and the House expressed approval of the Union by 236 votes to 30 (21st April 1800).

The further debates on the Bill are of little interest. In the absence of Fox, Grey was the protagonist of Opposition. Bankes, once a firm supporter of Pitt, opposed the measure. Wilberforce confessed to tremulous uncertainty about it, ostensibly because the addition of 100 Irish members to the House would add to the influence of the Crown, but more probably because he foresaw Catholic Emancipation. Peel, already known as one of the most successful and patriotic of Lancashire manufacturers, spoke up manfully for the Union, though he deeply regretted that Ireland would retain certain protective duties against Great Britain. Very noteworthy, in view of the son's championship of Free Trade in 1845, was the contention of the father that a weak country (Ireland) had no need of "protection" against a stronger one. In reality it would be as if a poor family shut its doors against assistance from a wealthy one. On the trading proposals Pitt's following was thinned down to 133; but the main question went through in May by overwhelming majorities in both Houses. In the following month it passed through the Irish Parliament.

Castlereagh thereupon introduced a Bill to indemnify the holders of pocket boroughs who would lose patronage by the proposed changes. The Government, having now revised its previous resolve, proposed to disfranchise as many as 84 small Irish boroughs, and allotted £15,000 for each, or £1,260,000 in all. In explanation of this payment it must be remembered that the owning of such boroughs was a recognized form of property, as appeared in Pitt's proposal of 1785 to compensate British owners whom he sought to dispossess. Nothing but the near approach of revolution in 1832 availed to shatter the system of pocket boroughs in Great Britain; and then their owners were sent empty away. The difference in treatment marks the infiltration of new ideas. In England and Ireland a vote and a seat had been a form of property. According to the Rights of Man the franchise was an inalienable right of citizenship.

The list of Union honours and preferments having been published, we need not dwell on that unsavoury topic, except to remark that the promotions in the peerage conferred for services in connection with the Union numbered forty-six; that the opposition of the Protestant Archbishop of Cashel was bought off by the promise of the Archbishopric of Dublin; and that the number of ecclesiastical jobs consequent on the Union was nearly twenty. The promotions in the legal profession numbered twelve. Twelve pensions and four titular honours were also granted. Five aspirants refused the posts offered to them because they expected "snug sinecures" which "require no attendance at all." In March 1805 Lord Hardwicke, successor to Cornwallis, complained that his funds were so embarrassed by the various claims that the Irish Civil List had only £150 in hand.[1] These sordid bargainings cannot be said to amount to wholesale corruption, and did not much exceed those which usually were needed to carry an important Bill through that Parliament. On the whole Pitt and his colleagues might reflect with satisfaction that the use of bribes served to cleanse the political life of Ireland in the future.

The Union of the British and Irish Parliaments is generally considered from the insular point of view. This is quite natural; for primarily it concerned the British Isles. Nevertheless the influences which brought it about were more than insular. The formation of the United Kingdom, by the Act which came into effect on 1st January 1801, was but one among many processes of consolidation then proceeding. France was the first State which succeeded in concentrating political power at the capital; and the new polity endued her with a strength sufficient to break in pieces the chaotic systems of her neighbours. The mania of the French for centralization was seen in their dealings with the Batavian Republic, and with the Swiss Confederation, which they crushed into the mould of an indivisible Republic. Everywhere the new unifying impulse undermined or swept away local Parliaments or provincial Estates. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity in practice meant a single, democratic, and centralized Government. In self defence the Powers threatened by France borrowed her political weapons. In succession Great Britain, Prussia, and for a time even Austria, pulled themselves together for the struggle. As the binding powers of commerce also tended towards union, the Nineteenth Century witnessed the absorption of little States, except where they represented a distinct nationality.

Confronted by the new and threatening forces in France, Pitt was virtually compelled to abrogate a system under which the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, and Ministers who had no definite responsibility, could meddle in military affairs. Under the sway of Mars dualism cannot exist. In the crises of a great war Cabals and Juntos go by the board. The Irish Ministry was little more than a Junto; and Ireland need not mourn its loss.

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[1] M. Mac Donagh, "The Viceroy's Post-Bag," 43-53; "Cornwallis Corresp.," iii, 245, 251-6, 267, 318-21.

The loss of her Parliament was far more serious; and if that body had represented the Irish people, Pitt's action would be indefensible. But Grattan's Parliament represented only a small minority of the Irish people; and that minority was resolved not to admit Catholics to full civic rights. It would have fought to maintain Protestant Episcopalian ascendancy; and under the conditions then existing England must have drawn the sword on behalf of her exacting "garrison."

Even in ordinary times such a state of things was unbearable; and the French saw it. Their aim was to strike at England through Ireland; and, but for Bonaparte's dreams of conquest in the East, this blow would have been dealt. Fortunately for Great Britain, his oriental ambitions served to divert to the sands of Egypt a thunderbolt which would have been fatal at Dublin. Even as it was, the mere presence of Bruix' great fleet at Brest prolonged the ferment in Ireland, thus emphasizing the force of the arguments in favour of Union. As we have seen, Pitt placed them in the forefront of his speeches; and those who charge him with hypocrisy, because France did not strike vigorously at Ireland during or after the Rebellion of 1798, only expose their ignorance of the facts and sentiments of that time. Throughout the years 1799 and 1800 the thought of invasion filled the minds of loyalists with dread, of malcontents with eager hope.

Nevertheless Pitt saw in the Union, not merely an expedient necessitated by war, but a permanent uplift for the whole nation. From the not dissimilar case of the Union with Scotland he augured hopefully for Ireland, believing that her commerce would thrive not less than that of North Britain. Still more did he found his hopes upon the religious settlement whereby he sought to crown his work. Ever since the days of Queen Elizabeth the strife between the Protestants and Catholics had marred the fortunes of that land. Pitt believed that it could be stilled in the larger political unity for which he now prepared.

CHAPTER XX

RESIGNATION

It is well known that no quiet could subsist in a country where there is not a Church Establishment.—GEORGE III TO ADDINGTON, 29th January 1801.

ON 25th September 1800 Pitt wrote to the Lord Chancellor, Loughborough, then in attendance on the King at Weymouth, requesting his presence at a Cabinet meeting in order to discuss the Catholic Question and proposals respecting tithes and a provision for the Catholic and Dissenting clergy. Five days later he explained to his colleagues the main proposal. In place of the Oaths of Supremacy and Abjuration he desired to impose on members of Parliament and officials merely the Oath of Allegiance, which would be no bar to Romanists. The change won the approval of all the Ministers present except Loughborough. He strongly objected to the proposal, upheld the present exclusive system, and demurred to any change affecting Roman Catholics except a commutation of tithes, a measure which he had in preparation. His colleagues, astonished at this firm opposition from the erstwhile Presbyterian of East Lothian, begged him to elaborate his Tithe Bill, and indulged the hope that further inquiry would weaken his resistance to the larger Reform. They did not know Loughborough.

There is a curious reference in one of Pitt's letters, of October 1798, to Loughborough as the Keeper of the King's conscience.[1] The phrase has an ironical ring well suited to the character of him who called it forth. Now, in his sixty-seventh year, he had run through the gamut of political professions. An adept in the art of changing sides, he, as Alexander Wedderburn, had earned the contempt or envy of all rivals. Yet such was the grace of his curves and the skill of his explanations that a new turn caused less surprise than admiration. Unlike his rival, Thurlow, who stormed ahead, Wedderburn trimmed his sails for every breeze and showed up best in light airs. Making few friends, he had few inveterate enemies; but one of them, Churchill, limned him as

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[1] "Dropmore P.," iv, 337.

> Adopting arts by which gay villains rise
> And reach the heights which honest men despise;
> Mute at the Bar and in the Senate loud,
> Dull 'mong the dullest, proudest of the proud,
> A pert prim prater of the northern race,
> Guilt in his heart, and famine in his face.

This was before Wedderburn had wormed himself into favour with Lord North and won the office of Solicitor-General (1778). Two years later he became Lord Loughborough, a title which Fox ascribed to his rancorous abuse of the American colonists. Figuring next as a member of the Fox-North Administration, he did not long share the misfortunes of his colleagues, for he alone of his colleagues contrived not to offend either the King or Pitt. This sleekness had its reward. The perversities of Thurlow having led to his fall in 1792, Loughborough became Lord Chancellor. His sage counsels heightened his reputation; and in October 1794 Pitt assigned to him the delicate task of seeing Earl Fitzwilliam and Grattan in order to smooth over the difficulties attending the union with the Old Whigs. At his house in Bedford Square, Bloomsbury, occurred some of the conferences which ensured Fitzwilliam's acceptance of the Irish Viceroyalty. Loughborough urged Pitt to do all in his power to prevent a rupture with the Portland Whigs or the Irish people. Counsels of conciliation then flowed from his lips and were treasured up. In fact, Pitt seems to have felt no suspicion of him despite his courtier-like ways and his constant attendance on the King. For Loughborough, like Dundas, had outlived the evil reputation of an earlier time. The Marquis of Buckingham, writing to Grenville on an awkward episode affecting Lord Berkeley, advised him to consult Loughborough as a man of discretion and undoubted private honour.[1]

Neither Pitt nor Grenville knew that Loughborough had played them false in 1795. The man who urged them to send Fitzwilliam to Dublin with the olive-branch soon tendered to George III official advice of an exactly opposite tenour, namely, that assent to Catholic Emancipation would involve a violation of the Coronation Oath. A day or two later he stated to Rose that he had given to the King wholly different counsels, to the effect that the Coronation Oath did not apply to the question at issue, which referred to a legislative enactment, not to an act of the King in his executive capacity.[1] Two other legal authorities unequivocally declared for this view of the case.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," v, 82; "Malmesbury Diaries," ii, 507. Sir John Macpherson called Loughborough by far the cleverest man in the country ("Glenbervie Journals," 54).

Whether in the autumn and winter of 1800 Loughborough's secret counsels had much effect on the King may be doubted; for George, in his letter of 6th February 1795 to Pitt, declared Catholic Emancipation to be "beyond the decision of any Cabinet of Ministers." As for the Church Establishment, it was essential to every State, and must be maintained intact. When George had once framed a resolve, it was hopeless to try to change it. Moreover, during the debates on the Union, early in 1799, he remarked to Dundas at Court that he hoped the Cabinet was not pledged to anything in favour of the Romanists. "No," was the wary reply, "that will be a matter for future consideration." Thereupon he set forth his scruples respecting the Coronation Oath. Dundas sought to allay them by observing that the Oath referred, not to his executive actions, but only to his assent to an act of the Legislature, a matter even then taken for granted. The remark, far from soothing the King, elicited the shrewd retort, "None of your Scotch metaphysics, Mr. Dundas! None of your Scotch metaphysics!"

The action of Loughborough, then, can only have put an edge on the King's resolve; and all speculation as to the exact nature of his "intrigues" at Weymouth or at Windsor is futile. In truth a collision between the King and Pitt on this topic was inevitable. The marvel is that there had been no serious friction during the past eighteen years. Probably the knowledge that a Fox Cabinet, dominated by the Prince of Wales, was the only alternative to Pitt had exerted a chastening influence on the once headstrong monarch; but now even that spectre faded away before the more potent wraith of mangled Protestantism. The King was a sincerely religious man in his own narrow way;

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[1] Campbell, viii, 172; G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 300.

and arguments about the Coronation Oath were as useless with him as discussions on Modernism are with Pius X.

Pitt therefore kept his plans secret. But we must here digress to notice an assertion to the contrary. Malmesbury avers that Loughborough, while at Weymouth in the autumn of 1800, informed his cousin, Auckland, and the Archbishop of Canterbury of the danger to the Established Church; that the latter wrote to the King, who thereupon upbraided Pitt. Now, it is highly probable that Auckland knew nothing of the matter until the end of January 1801,[1] and the secret almost certainly did not come to light until then, when the Archbishop, Auckland's brother-in-law, was a prey to nervous anxieties resulting from recent and agitating news. Further, no such letter from the King to Pitt is extant either at the Public Record Office, Orwell Park, or Chevening; and if the proposals were known to George why did he fume at Pitt and Castlereagh on 28th January for springing the mine upon him? Finally, if the King, while at Weymouth, blamed Pitt for bringing the matter forward, why did Malmesbury censure him for keeping it secret? It is well to probe these absurdities, for they reveal the untrustworthiness of the Earl on this question.

To revert to Pitt's procedure; there were two arguments on which he must have relied for convincing the King of the need of granting Catholic Emancipation. Firstly, the Irish Catholics had, on the whole, behaved with marked loyalty and moderation during the wearisome debates on the Union at Dublin, a course of conduct markedly different from the acrid and factious tactics of the privileged Protestant Episcopalians. Secondly, as the summer of 1800 waned to autumn, the position of Great Britain became almost desperate. Her ally, Austria, had lost Lombardy and was fighting a losing game in Swabia. Russia had not only left the Second Coalition, but was threatening England with a renewal of the Armed Neutrality League. At home a bad harvest was sending up corn to famine prices; and sedition again raised its head. In such a case would not a patriotic ruler waive his objections to a measure essential not only to peace and quiet in Ireland, but to the stability of the United Kingdom? The latter consideration derived added force from the fact that Bonaparte, fresh from his triumphs in Italy, was inaugurating a policy of conciliation which promised to end the long ferment in the west of France and to make of her a really united nation. While he was allaying Jacobinical zeal and royalist bigotry, could Britons afford to keep up internal causes of friction, and, disunited among themselves, face a hostile world in arms? In such an emergency would not the King waive even his conscientious scruples, and at the cost of some qualms pacify and consolidate his nominally united realms?

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 21; "Auckland Journals," iv, 114-25.

For it was certain that the Irish Catholics would not rest now that the boon of Emancipation was well within reach. Pitt and Cornwallis had aroused their hopes. While not openly promising that the portals at Westminster should be thrown open to Roman Catholics, Ministers had allowed hints to go forth definite enough to influence opinion, especially in Cork, Tipperary, and Galway. In fact, Castlereagh assured Pitt that the help of Catholics had turned the wavering scales in favour of Union.[1] The claims of honour therefore required that Pitt should do all in his power to requite the services of a great body of men, long depressed and maligned, who, when tempted by the foreigner to revolt, had on the whole shown remarkable patience and fidelity. The pressure of this problem was too much for the scanty strength of Pitt. Worried by private financial needs, and distressed at the bewildering change in European affairs, he broke down in health in September—October; and a period of rest and change at Addington's seat at Woodley, near Reading, was all too short for a complete recovery (18th October to 5th November). Addington, describing this visit, remarked that Pitt had become one of his family. Neither of them knew that a time of feud was at hand.

At the close of the year Castlereagh came from Dublin to London to confer with Ministers on legal and other details connected with the proposal of Catholic Emancipation. By that time Loughborough's sharp opposition to the measure was known at Dublin Castle, where Cornwallis declared all resistance to the measure to be mere madness. The Catholics, he reported, were quiet merely because they were confident of success. Cooke, though once opposed to Catholic Emancipation, now accepted it as a necessity.[2] Nevertheless in the King's view Catholic Emancipation was wholly incompatible with his Coronation Oath and with the Church Establishment in England. In the middle of December the Chancellor drew up an able and very detailed Memorandum on the legal aspects of the case. He even discoursed on the proselytizing zeal of Romanists and the material causes of discontent in Ireland which the Union would probably dispel. As Cooke remarked, the paper seemed designed to close the question for ever.[1]

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[1] "Castlereagh Corresp." iv 8-12.

[2] *Ibid.*, iii, 418; iv, 13, 17-20.

Pitt was equally determined to set the question at rest. He and Castlereagh had confidence in the issue; and Cornwallis declared that if Pitt were firm he would meet with no difficulty. Accordingly Pitt inserted in the King's Speech for the ensuing session a passage expressing confidence that Parliament would seek to improve the benefits already secured by the Act of Union. The phrase was smooth enough to leave the King's conscience unruffled, and on 23rd January he assented to the Speech, requesting that no change be made.[2] But while Pitt sapped the approaches to the citadel, Loughborough countermined him. On what day and in what manner he informed the King of the proposed measure of Catholic Emancipation is not clear. Possibly George scented mischief in a short conversation with Spencer and Grenville about the middle of January. But his brain was set on fire by something which he heard on 27th or 28th January. On the latter day (Wednesday), during the *levée* at St. James's Palace, his behaviour betrayed unusual excitement, and he said warmly to Windham, a friend of the measure, that he regarded all supporters of it as "personally indisposed" to him. Waxing hotter in the course of the function, he declared in a loud voice to Dundas: "What is this that the young Lord [Castlereagh] has brought over, which they are going to throw at my head? Lord C. came over with the plan in September. . . . I shall reckon any man my personal enemy who proposes any such measure. The most Jacobinical thing I ever heard of."

This extraordinary outburst naturally led Ministers to confer together on the morrow; and they requested Grenville to prepare a paper explaining the proposed changes in the form of oath for members of Parliament and officials. Grenville declined this task, which Pitt himself then undertook. This question, I may note, was far more difficult than outsiders could understand. Castlereagh's interviews with Pitt in September, and now again in January, had only recently brought Ministers near to an agreement, a fact which fully accounts for the delay in drafting the proposals in a form suitable for the King's inspection.[1] On that day George took another step betokening irrevocable opposition. He begged Addington to see Pitt and convince him of the danger of the measure. The King confessed that he could scarcely keep his temper in speaking about it; for it portended the destruction of the Established Church and the end of all order in civil life. Addington therefore paid a visit to Pitt, who cannot have been well pleased to see him acting as a tool of the King. The interview, however, seems to have been friendly, and it inspired Addington with the complacent hope that he had dissuaded Pitt. Possibly he or Auckland alarmed Dr. Moore, Archbishop of Canterbury, and set the bishops in motion. Other persons working to this end were the Earl of Clare and the Irish Primate. The latter took a prominent part in arousing the fears of the King. Cooke wrote: "The Primate was a great card, was much consulted by the King, for ever with him, or in correspondence with him. . . . The Archbishop of Canterbury was at first so nervous that for ten or twelve nights he could not sleep, and our Primate was daily with him, encouraging him."[2]

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[1] Pellew, i, *ad fin.* The original is in "H. O.," Ireland (Corresp.), 99, together with nine others for or against Catholic Emancipation, some with notes by Castlereagh.

[2] The first Imperial Parliament met on 22nd January; but time was taken up in swearing in members and choosing a Speaker. Addington was chosen. The King's Speech was fixed for 2nd February.

It is uncertain how far Pitt was aware of the many adverse influences playing upon the King; for his papers on this topic are unusually scanty. On the 30th he sent a draft of his proposals to Loughborough, a sign that he would persevere with them. On the morrow George again summoned Addington to the palace, and adjured him to form a Ministry. This offer preceded the arrival of any intimation from Pitt of his desire to resign if his advice were rejected. Addington for his part begged to be excused; whereupon the King exclaimed: "Lay your hand upon your heart and ask yourself where I am to turn for support if *you* do not stand by me."[3] Meanwhile Pitt was inditing his famous letter of 31st January, to the King, of which this summary must suffice:

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[1] "Castlereagh Corresp.," iv, 17-20; G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 303.

[2] *Ibid.*, iv, 81.

[3] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 309; Pellew, i, 287. Addington afterwards de-

> Pitt has heard with deep regret of the opposition displayed by His Majesty to the proposals of Catholic Emancipation, which are approved by the majority of the Cabinet and regarded as a natural sequel to the Act of Union. The admission of Catholics and Dissenters to certain offices, and of Catholics to Parliament, now involves little or no danger to the Established Church or to the Protestant interest, as the Catholics disclaim the obnoxious tenets once held by them. A form of oath can be devised to exclude those Dissenters who may have designs against the constitution either in Church or State. The Irish Catholic clergy may be attached to the Government by making their maintenance partly dependent on the State. These changes would adapt the constitution to present needs. Pitt therefore earnestly commends the measure to the consideration of His Majesty. Meanwhile no steps will be taken in the matter; but, if on examination the measure should not be approved, Pitt will beg to be allowed to resign, though in such a way as to occasion the least possible difficulty. Finally he takes the liberty "of most respectfully, but explicitly, submitting to Your Majesty the indispensable necessity of effectually discountenancing, in the whole of the interval, all attempts to make use of Your Majesty's name, or to influence the opinion of any individual on any part of the subject."

In the last sentence Pitt administered a telling and dignified rebuke for the outrageous behaviour of the King at the *levée*. A reply came on the morrow, couched in pompously ungrammatical terms, which sufficiently refute the rumour that it was composed by that polished talker, Loughborough. George declared that his Oath bound him to support the Established Church; that State officials must be in active communion with that Church. He therefore refused to discuss the present proposals, which tended to destroy the groundwork of the Constitution. Respecting the suggested truce of silence he wrote as follows: "Mr. Pitt once acquainted with my sentiments, his assuring me that he will stave off the only question whereon I fear from his letter we can never agree—for the advantage and comfort of continuing to have his advice and exertions in public affairs I will certainly abstain from talking on this subject which is the one nearest my heart." The meaning of these words is not easy to fix; but apparently the King meant to say that his silence

stroyed those letters of the King to him which he considered unsuitable for publication.

on the subject was conditional on Pitt promising never to bring it forward again. Now, Pitt had made no such promise. He required that, while the King was examining the proposals of his Cabinet, he would abstain from setting his counsellors against it. George III evaded this request, thereby leaving himself free to talk at large against Catholic Emancipation while he was supposed to be examining its details. We may be sure that this sentence clinched Pitt's resolve to resign at the earliest possible moment.[1]

He said so in his reply of 3rd February to the King. He expressed both regret at the King's resolve on this question, and a desire to consult his convenience, though continuance in office even for a short time became very difficult in view of the King's refusal to undertake to discountenance the use of his name during the interval. In every respect the accession of another Minister was to be desired. Pitt closed this painful correspondence with a letter, also of 3rd February, requesting a pension of £1,500 a year for Long, one of the secretaries of the Treasury, whose private means were so slender as to leave him in discomfort if he should resign. The King briefly assented to Pitt's retirement and to Long's pension. To Long's services the King accorded a few words of thanks: to those of Pitt not a word. This is the more remarkable as Pitt was then suffering from an attack of gout which depressed him greatly; but, as we shall see, the King in private expressed his deep obligations, and requested him to keep in office until all the new appointments were settled.[2] This involved a delay of nearly six weeks, which were among the most trying of his career.

On 5th February the King succeeded in persuading Addington to form a Ministry. Accordingly on the 10th he resigned the office of Speaker, being succeeded by Sir John Mitford, afterwards Lord Redesdale. There is no ground for the insinuation that Addington snatched at office. He took it without eagerness but from conscientious conviction; and Pitt, with the usual generosity of his nature, assured him of his support as a private member. Of Pitt's colleagues Grenville, Dundas, Spencer, and Windham offered their resignations; so also did Cornwallis and Castlereagh at Dublin. Portland retained the Home Secretaryship. Of late he had wavered on the subject of Catholic Emancipation, perhaps owing to the arguments of Loughborough. Westmorland and Chatham also kept their positions of Lord Privy Seal and Lord President. The retention of office by the latter aroused some comment; but as the earnest desire of Pitt was to disarrange the Ministry as little as possible, he probably approved conduct which outsiders condemned as unbrotherly.

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[1] Grenville agreed with Pitt's letter to the King, but doubted the possibility of precluding discussion on the question, as it was already in the papers. He assured Pitt that he would act closely with him (Grenville to Pitt, 1st February 1801; Pretyman MSS.). Pitt afterwards declared that his resignation was largely due to the manner in which the King opposed him.

[2] "Lord Colchester's Diaries," 1, 224.

The following letter from Chatham, dated Winchester, 6th February, is of interest. After expressing his regret at Pitt's resignation, he continues: "Upon the measure itself of granting further indulgence to the Catholics I have neither time, nor indeed would it be of any use, to say anything at present. I will only observe that if, by being on the spot, I could in any degree have contributed even to put off the extremity to which the agitation of it has led, I should think I had done much, and I should be most unhappy in having been absent; otherwise I consider myself as fortunate in having avoided a discussion which could only have been painful to me in many respects. As things stand, I shall certainly think it my duty to come to town in a few days, and I will defer, till we meet, any further remarks; I will only add that if your part is irrevocably taken, the King could not have acted more wisely than in having recourse to the Speaker. . . . I see all the difficulty and delicacy of your situation."[1]

Far less charitable were the sentiments of Dundas in the following letter:

Wimbledon, 7 *Feb.*, 1801.[2]

I know not to what stage the Speaker's endeavours to form an Arrangement have proceeded; but it is impossible for me not to whisper into your ear my conviction that no Arrangement can be formed under him as its head that will not crumble to pieces almost as soon as formed. Our friends who, as an act of friendship and attachment to you agree to remain in office, do it with the utmost chagrin and unwillingness; and among the other considerations which operate upon them the feeling that they are embarking in an Administration under a head totally incapable to carry it on and which must of course soon be an object of ridicule is uppermost in their minds. Add to this that, though they will not certainly enter into faction and opposition, all the aristocracy of the country at present cordially connected with Government, and part of it under you, feel a degradation in the first Minister of the Country being selected from [*sic*] a Person of the description of Mr. Addington without the slightest pretensions to justify it, and destitute of abilities to carry it on. Depend upon it I am not exaggerating the state of the case; and a very short experience will prove that I am right; and the Speaker will ere long feel that he has fallen from a most exalted situation and character into one of a very opposite description. Save him from it if not too late. Yourself excluded from it, I am afraid nothing permanent can be formed; but if the Speaker was to advise the King to call upon the Duke of Portland to form an Administration, I am persuaded His Grace at the head of it, with either Steele, Ryder, Lord Hawkesbury, or even Mr. Abbott as his Chancellor of the Exchequer, would fill the public eye infinitely more than anything that can be found upon the plan now in agitation. By the answer I have received from the King to my resignation I must entreat you without delay to send for my correspondence with Lord Westmorland in order that I may be sure of what my recollection suggests, that I refused to give the promise of the Government at home that what was then proposed was the ultimatum of concession.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 122.

[2] Pretyman MSS

The last sentence of Chatham's letter refers to the difficulties of Pitt's position. These have nearly always been overlooked. Yet his decision turned finally on a question of honour. It is true that neither Pitt nor Cornwallis gave a distinct pledge to the Irish Catholics that the Cabinet would press their claims if they would support the Union. But no such pledge could have been given without exasperating the King and the privileged phalanx at St. Stephen's Green. Therefore, when the critics of Pitt demand to see the proof that he made a promise, they ask for what, in the nature of the case, could not be forthcoming. Cornwallis and Castlereagh were aware of the need of extreme caution in making overtures to the leading Catholics; and they afterwards denied that they gave a distinct pledge. Nevertheless, some of their agents induced the Catholics of the south and west of Ireland, to act in a "highly useful" manner, which averted an otherwise dangerous opposition. Castlereagh explained this to Pitt early in January;[1] and the scrupulous

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[1] "Castlereagh Corresp.," iv, 8-12. Both Grenville and Windham declared in Parliament in May 1805 that hopes were held out to the Irish Catholics, and that their support of the Union was the result (Hansard, iv, 659, 1022).

Minister must have considered these promises as a debt of honour. That some of the leading Irish Catholics viewed them in the same light appears in an account of a representative meeting held at Ryan's house in Marlborough Street, Dublin, on 27th October 1804. Ryan then set forth the condition of his co-religionists at the time of the Union, and referred to the stipulations made to them by Government. Others, including Lord Fingall and a barrister, Scully, followed; and after two more meetings, they resolved to petition Pitt, who had by that time returned to office, it being known that he was at heart favourable to their claims.[1] But in his speech of 14th May 1805 on this topic, he said, "I did not make a distinct pledge. On the contrary, I believe the line of argument I took was, that if it should be thought right to give what the Catholics required, it might be given with more safety to the Empire.[2]

What the stipulations were is not clear; for with this exception the Irish Records are disappointingly silent. But it is clear that Canning finally came to consider them binding on an honourable man. In his great speech on Catholic Emancipation in March 1827, while admitting that Pitt in 1800 made no definite promise to the Catholics, he added these notable words: "The Catholics were made to believe, and that belief was a powerful inducement to them to lend their aid towards the accomplishment of the measure [the Union] that in the Imperial Parliament the question which so nearly concerned them would be more favourably entertained. . . . There is no tribunal, however solemn, before which I am not prepared to depose to my firm belief in the sincerity of Mr. Pitt's wishes and intentions to carry it." This passage once for all refutes the charges of insincerity which certain of Canning's biographers have brought against Pitt.

Light is thrown on this topic by notes of Bishop Tomline. Pitt consulted his former tutor at this crisis; for on 6th February he wrote warning him of his approaching resignation on grounds which he desired to explain. He added: "I am in the firm persuasion that an Arrangement can be formed to which I can give a cordial general support, and which may keep everything safe."[3] The bishop thereupon came to town and saw much of Pitt, whose conduct he thus describes: "I never saw Mr. Pitt in more uniformly cheerful spirits, although everyone about him was dejected and melancholy. He talked of his quitting office with the utmost composure, gave the King the highest credit for the notions on which he acted, and also fully acquitted those who were supposed to have influenced his sentiments and conduct. He felt some dissatisfaction at the conduct of one who was *not* a Cabinet Minister, and was under great obligations to Mr. Pitt, who had by intrigues and misrepresentations and every unfair means in his power endeavoured to influence people's opinion on the question and to excite alarm and prejudice against him." The reference here is to Lord Auckland, but nothing definite is known as to his conduct. The bishop then states that Pitt's equanimity was surprising, inasmuch as his resignation would reduce his income to less than that of a country gentleman and necessitate the sale of Holwood. Nevertheless, no hasty word fell from him even in the most confidential conversation; but he talked cheerfully of living in privacy for the rest of his life, and expressed satisfaction that men who were attached to the constitution would carry on affairs of State. The safety of the country seemed to be his only concern. Tomline then describes the cause and the circumstances of Pitt's resignation:[1]

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[1] "H. O.," Ireland (Corresp.), 99.

[2] Hansard, iv, 1015.

[3] Pretyman MSS.

> While the business of the Union was going on, Lord Cornwallis had informed the Ministers in England that the support of the Catholics to the measure would in a great degree depend upon the intention of Ministers to remove those disabilities under which they at present laboured. This produced in the Cabinet a discussion of the question of Catholic Emancipation, as it is called, and Lord Cornwallis was authorized to declare that it was intended by Government, after the Union should have taken place, to grant to the Catholics some further indulgences; but he was not authorized to pledge the Government to any particular measure, nor was any plan of this kind settled by the Cabinet. When the King's Speech was to be drawn up for the opening of the Imperial Parliament, the Catholic Question naturally occurred and gave rise to a good deal of discussion in the Cabinet. Mr. Pitt, Lord Grenville, Lord Spencer, Mr. Dundas, and Mr. Wyndham declared themselves in favour of Catholic Emancipation; and the Lord Chancellor, the Duke of Portland and Lord Westmorland against it. Lord Chatham and Lord Liverpool did not attend the Council, the former being at Winchester as military commander of that district and the latter was confined to his house by illness.
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> The King was of course informed of this division in the Cabinet and

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

took a decided part by talking against the question freely and openly to everyone he saw. On Wednesday, the 28th of January, the King said to Mr. D[undas] at the *levée* in such a voice that those who were near might hear him—"So here is an Irish Secretary come over to propose in Parliament the Emancipation of the Irish Catholics, as they call it"—and then he declared himself in the strongest degree hostile to the question. This was of course reported to Mr. Pitt. On the Friday (the 30th) the King sent for the Speaker to the Queen's House and conversed with him a long time. Upon my mentioning this circumstance to Mr. Pitt, he said he knew what happened at that interview and seemed perfectly satisfied with it. He had before told me (namely, the first night he saw me, Saturday, Feb. 7th) that he knew nine days before that he should be under the necessity of resigning. On the 31st Mr. Pitt wrote his first letter to the King. Two letters only passed on each side, which see. Mr. Pitt did not see the King till at the *levée* on Wednesday the 11th [February]. The King spoke to him in the most gracious manner—"You have behaved like yourself throughout this business. Nothing could possibly be more honourable. I have a great deal more to say to you."—"Your Majesty has already said much more than the occasion calls for."—"Oh no, I have not; and I do not care who hears me: it was impossible for anyone to behave more honourably." After more conversation of the same kind the King desired to see Mr. Pitt in the closet. The *levée* continued, and, some little time after, Mr. Pitt said to the King: "Your Majesty will pardon me if I take the liberty of saying that I fear I shall not be able to attend Your Majesty in the closet." "Oh yes: you must; I have just done." The King went to the closet and Mr. Pitt attended him. Nothing could exceed the kindness of the King towards Mr. Pitt: he was affected very much and more than once. The conversation lasted more than half an hour; and in the course of it the King said that, tho' he could no longer retain Mr. Pitt in his service, he hoped to have him as his friend. Mr. Pitt, with strong expressions both of duty and attachment and love to His Majesty, submitted that any intercourse of that kind might be injurious to His Majesty's Government; for that it was very important that his new Ministers should appear to act by themselves and for themselves, and that if he was frequently with His Majesty, unfavourable conclusions might be drawn concerning his interference or influence. This seemed to satisfy the King, and they parted. At the *levée* the King spoke in the highest terms of Mr. Pitt's conduct throughout the business of his resignation, and said that it was very different from that of his predecessors.

This narrative needs little comment, except on the phrase that the Cabinet had promised to grant the Catholics "some further indulgences." Probably the schism occurred on the extent of those concessions, Pitt and the majority desiring the admission of Catholics to Parliament and to offices of trust, while Loughborough and the minority refused to do more than grant some measure of support to the Irish priests.[1] The King probably opposed both concessions; and Pitt seems to have ascribed his strenuous opposition more to the intrigues of Auckland than to those of Loughborough. In this he was probably mistaken. The best judge on this question, the monarch himself, certainly looked on the Chancellor as a traitor. But in truth the crisis could not be avoided. The King acknowledged as much in his effusive comments on the extremely honourable conduct of Pitt, but he also most firmly declared that he could no longer retain him in his service. This was in effect a dismissal. On 18th February, George wrote a brief letter expressing his sorrow at the close of Pitt's political career and his satisfaction that Parliament had passed the Ways and Means without debate. Thus did he close his correspondence with a Minister who had devotedly served him for more than seventeen years.

There is little need to notice the hasty and spiteful comments of Lord Malmesbury, that Pitt was playing a selfishly criminal game by resigning, with the evident aim of showing his own strength and being called back to office on his own terms.[2] The Malmesbury Diaries at this point consist chiefly of hearsays which can readily be refuted. But this calumny spread widely, and Fox finally barbed it with the hint that the substitution of Addington for Pitt was "a notorious juggle," the former being obviously a dummy to be knocked down when it suited Pitt to come back fancy-free about the Catholics. Fortunately, the correspondence of statesmen often supplies antidotes to the venomous gibes of bystanders; and a case in point is a phrase in Grenville's letter of 13th February to Minto: "There was no alternative except that of taking this step [resignation] or or agreeing to the disguise or dereliction of one's opinion on one of the most important questions in the whole range of our domestic policy."[1]

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[1] In "H. O.," Ireland (Corresp.), 99, are long reports of the Irish Catholic bishops, dated November 1800, on the state of their dioceses. The bishops' incomes did not average more than £300 a year. The Archbishops of Dublin and Tuam reckoned the total number of parish priests and curates at 1,800, of whom 1,400 were seculars and 400 regulars. The benefices numbered 1,200; each required the services of two priests. The destruction of the seminaries in France and the poverty of the Irish made it impossible to supply or support 2,400 clergy. Other papers follow for and against Catholic Emancipation. See also "Castlereagh Corresp.," iii, *ad fin.*

[2] "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 3, 8, 9, 14.

Pitt has been sharply censured for his excessive scrupulousness in resigning at so serious a crisis. But the verdict must depend on three main issues, the importance of the question at stake, that of the services rendered by the Irish Catholics, and the nature of the promises made to them. Now, no one will deny that in the days when France was striving to effect the independence of Ireland—for Bonaparte was thought to be pressing on the war with that aim in view[2]—the question of the Union stood paramount. It was the most important problem confronting Parliament since the Union with Scotland in 1707; and the difficulties encountered were greater than those raised by the Scots. The services of the Irish Catholics to the cause of the Union are not easy to assess; but Castlereagh, a cool judge, rated them high. In such a case a man of sensitive conscience will deem himself bound to those who, in reliance on his sense of honour, acted in a way that ensured the success of his measure. Above all, in so tangled a situation the final decision will depend on the character of the statesman. Walpole would have waived aside the debt of honour. Pitt resolved to discharge it.

It is scarcely necessary to notice another slander, that Pitt resigned because, in his inability to procure peace from France, he intended to put Addington in office merely for that purpose, to be ousted when it was fulfilled. No evidence is forthcoming in support of this version, which found no small favour with Continental historians of a former generation; but it is now clear that the split occurred solely on Catholic Emancipation. Those Ministers who approved it resigned; while its opponents remained in office, namely, Portland, Chatham, and Westmorland. The same is true of the subordinate offices. The new Cabinet decided to grant only occasional relief and a "compassionate allowance" to the Irish priests.[3] In several other matters its policy differed from that of Pitt; and Addington soon made it apparent that he was no stop-gap.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," vi, 445. Mulgrave, who knew Pitt well, was convinced of his sincerity in resigning. His letter of 9th February 1801 (quoted by R. Plumer Ward, "Memoirs," i, 44) refutes the insinuations of Sorel (vi, 101) that Pitt resigned because he could not make peace with France.

[2] "Castlereagh Corresp.," iii, 285.

[3] "Lord Colchester's Diaries," i, 286.

But now this clear issue was to be blurred in the blinding glare of the King's lunacy. The causes of the malady of February 1801 were partly physical, partly mental. While still agitated by the dismissal of his trusted Minister, the King, two days later, went to church on the day appointed for the National Fast. That day of supplication for delivery from the perils of the time was shrouded in gloom and snow. He remained a long time in church and took a chill. Nevertheless, with his wonted energy he persisted in transacting business with Addington, until the stress told on the brain. On the 16th slight feverish symptoms began to develop. Yet Addington saw him often about new appointments, until on Sunday the 22nd the symptoms caused some concern. Willis, son of the man who had so much control over him during the illness of 1788-9, now came to the Queen's House, and resumed the old regimen. Dr. Gisborne was also in attendance. From the notes of Tomline we glean curious details about the illness. The bilious symptoms were very pronounced, and after the 23rd the King became worse. His manner became nervous and "hurried." He went up to Willis and shook him eagerly by the hand. When the Queen and princesses rose to leave, he jocosely extended his arms so as to stop them; whereupon Willis stepped forward, and, looking at him earnestly, told him he was very ill. The King at once said with a deep sigh: "I see, I cannot deceive you. I have deceived all the rest. They think me well; but I cannot deceive you." He then burst into an agony of weeping, threw himself into Willis's arms, and said: "You are right. I am ill indeed. But oh! for God's sake, keep your father from me, and keep off a Regency."

After weeping for a quarter of an hour, he walked about the room with Willis for an hour and a half. In the evening he grew worse. At 2.30 a.m. he went to bed, while the Duke of Kent and Willis watched by the door. As in the previous seizure, intervals of calm and reasonableness alternated strangely with fits of delirium or even of violence. Now and again he spoke collectedly, and at such times those about him rejoiced to hear the familiar "What, what," wherewith he prefaced his remarks.[1]

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

Frequently he declared that he would uphold the Church of England; or again his thoughts started away from the loathed spectre of a Regency. On 2nd March the illness took so violent a turn that his life seemed in danger; but, as was the case twelve years before, long spells of sleep supervened and brought his pulse down from 136 to 84. His powers of recovery surprised every one about him. By 6th March he was so far well as to be allowed to see the Dukes of York, Kent, and Cumberland. Not until 9th March did he undergo the more trying ordeal of seeing the Prince of Wales. On that same day he requested to see Pitt, who very properly declined, suggesting, with all deference, that Addington was the proper person for an interview.[1]

Meanwhile, at or just after the crisis of the illness, Pitt gave a very important pledge. If we may trust the far from convincing statements of Lord Malmesbury, who had the story from Pelham, the King on 7th March charged Willis to inform Pitt of the improvement in his health, and to add the biting words: "But what has not *he* to answer for who is the cause of my having been ill at all?" Pelham further asserted that Pitt, in a "most dutiful, humble and contrite answer," wrote down his resolve to give up Catholic Emancipation.[2] Now it is almost certain that Pitt sent no such letter, for none exists either at the Public Record Office, Orwell Park, or Chevening. Tomline asserts that Pitt sent by Willis a verbal assurance that he would not agitate Catholic Emancipation again during the King's reign; whereupon George III exclaimed: "Now my mind will be at ease." The bishop, however, believed that Pitt's assurance was reported in a more emphatic form than was warranted; and the statesman does not seem to have considered himself absolutely bound by it. Yet the written assurance sent by Rose to the King on behalf of Pitt seems binding during that reign.[3]

Thus had the King conquered—by madness. No incident in the life of Pitt is more unfortunate than this surrender. The King had made an ungenerous use of the privileges of an invalid, and the pressure which he put on Pitt passes the bounds even of the immorality of a sick-room. The illness began with a chill due to his own imprudence; but he used its later developments to extort a promise which otherwise would never have been forthcoming. Nothing but the crisis in the King's illness led Pitt to waver. For at the end of February he authorized Castlereagh to send to Cornwallis at Dublin a declaration intended to reassure the Irish Catholics. It pointed out that the majority of the Cabinet had resigned owing to the impossibility of carrying Catholic Emancipation at the present juncture. He (Pitt) still resolved to do his utmost for the success of that cause; and therefore begged them to refrain from any conduct which would prejudice it in the future. Cornwallis delivered this and another paper to the titular Archbishop of Dublin and Lord Fingall for circulation among their friends and found that it produced good results.[1] Far different, of course, was the effect produced on those few who knew of Pitt's private promise to the King. They contrasted it with the contrary promise to the Irish Catholics and drew the most unfavourable inferences, forgetting that between 27th February and 2nd March the King's illness had taken so dangerous a turn as perhaps to justify the use of that political sedative.

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[1] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 313, 330; "Lord Colchester's Diaries," i, 244.

[2] "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 31, 32.

[3] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 360; Stanhope, iii, 304, 305.

While blaming Pitt for weakness in giving this pledge to the King, we must remember that the prolongation of the reign of George III was the first desire of all responsible statesmen. The intrigues of the Prince of Wales and Fox for a Regency were again beginning; and thus there loomed ahead an appalling vista of waste and demoralization. In these circumstances Dundas and Cornwallis came to the conclusion that the King's conscience must not again be troubled. Grenville seems to have held firm on the Catholic Question.[2] But his colleagues now took an opportunist view. Pitt had two or three interviews with the Prince of Wales, late in February and early in March, and made it clear that the Prince would be well advised to accept the Regency Bill drafted in 1789. On the Prince asking whether this was the opinion of certain of Pitt's colleagues, who then opposed that Bill as derogatory to his interests, Pitt at once replied in the affirmative; and when the Prince further objected to certain restrictions on the power of the Regent, Pitt declared that no change would be acceptable. They parted courteously but coolly; and we may be sure that the Prince never forgave Pitt for his uncompromising assertion of the rights of Parliament.

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[1] "Cornwallis Corresp.," iii, 343-9.

[2] *Ibid.*, iii, 346; "Lord Colchester's Diaries," i, 243. The writer in the "Edinburgh Review" for 1858, who censured Pitt, failed to notice the entire change in the political situation brought about by the King's acute malady.

So dark was the outlook at home and abroad that Pitt was persuaded, probably by Dundas, Tomline, Rose, and Canning, to re-consider the whole question with a view to continuance in office, provided that some suitable position were found for Addington. The bishop penned some notes of sharp criticism on the conduct of Addington, affirming that, if he had been patriotic and sincere, he would have pressed Pitt to remain in office. The following words are remarkable: "Mr. Pitt, Mr. Dundas and myself had a long conversation upon this point at Wimbledon; and I am satisfied that, if Mr. Addington had entered into the idea cordially, Mr. Pitt's resignation might have been prevented." He adds that they drew up a tentative scheme of a Cabinet, Pitt remaining as chief, while Addington was to be a Secretary of State; but the latter rejected this indignantly.[1] Pitt also finally deemed the plan "utterly improper," and threatened to hold aloof from those who would not support the new Administration or croaked about its instability. The action of Dundas and the bishop was unfortunate; for it gave rise to the report that Pitt was intriguing with them for a shuffling of offices in which he would again come out at the top; and, as usually happens, the meanest version overshadowed the truth.

Fortune willed that the new Ministry, by far the weakest Ministry of recent times, should win two brilliant successes and secure a not inglorious peace. So bewildering a change seemed impossible in the dark days of February—March 1801, when it was the bounden duty of every strong man to remain at his post, and of under-studies to stand aside. The fates and Addington willed otherwise. Pitt resigned on 14th March, nineteen days before Nelson triumphed at Copenhagen.

Meanwhile Pitt had endeavoured to place the nation's finance on a sound footing. His Budget speech of 18th February has a ring of confidence and pride. True, the expenses were unprecedentedly heavy. Great Britain had to provide £12,117,000, and Ireland £3,785,000, for the army alone. The navy cost £15,800,000; the Ordnance £1,938,000. The bad seasons or other causes having lessened the yield of the Income Tax and the Malt Tax, he proposed further imposts upon sugar, raisins, tea, paper, timber, lead, and all exports without exception. He increased the Excise duty on horses, even those used for agriculture, on stamp duties, and on the postage of letters. He also urged that not less than £200,000 (the normal amount) should be set apart for the reduction of the British National Debt. Over against these depressing proposals he set the notable fact that British commerce prospered more than ever, and that the revenue showed remarkable buoyancy. From these extraordinary symptons he augured that the strength and spirit of the people were equal to all the demands of the crisis; and he declared that the attachment of the nation to its revered monarch and beloved constitution furnished a moving spectacle to Europe. The House accepted these crushing imposts without demur.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

He found it more difficult to reconcile his followers to the sway of Addington. As we have seen, Dundas had already expressed to Pitt his scorn of him and his desire for a Portland Ministry. Rose also refused to serve under a man whom he accused (unjustly, as we now know) of worming his way to office; and the high-spirited Canning declined to give to Pitt any pledge except that he would not laugh at the new Prime Minister. It is clear that Canning, like his chief, disliked resignation. As the gifted young Irishman wrote, it was not at all good fun to move out of the best house in London (Downing Street) and hunt about for a little dwelling.[1] Ryder and Steele kept their posts.

Singular to relate, the Mr. Pliable of so many Ministries was soon to be turned out. Loughborough, on whose back Addington climbed to power, forthwith received a direct intimation to withdraw. The Lord Chancellor therefore closed his career, the King bestowing on him for his services to religion the title Earl of Rosslyn. To finish with him, we may note that his settlement near Windsor and his assiduous courting of the royal favour finally secured an epitaph quite as piquant as any which George bestowed. On hearing of Rosslyn's sudden death early in 1805, the King earnestly asked the messenger whether the news was trustworthy; and, on receiving a reassuring reply, he said: "Then, he has not left a greater knave behind him in my dominions." The comment of Thurlow on this gracious remark is equally notable: "Then I presume that His Majesty is quite sane at present."

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[1] Bagot, "Canning and his Friends," i, 180

One of Pitt's friendships was severed by the crisis. As we have seen, he deeply resented the part played by Auckland. To his letter of remonstrance he replied very briefly that, widely as they differed on the topic at issue, they differed quite as much as to the question on which side there had been a failure of friendship, confidence, or attention. The rupture became complete on 20th March, when Auckland declared in the Lords that Pitt's resignation was involved in mystery which the eye could not penetrate. The insinuation wounded Pitt deeply; and his intercourse with Auckland entirely ceased. Pitt was not exacting in his social intercourse; but no man of high feeling can endure secret opposition, followed by a veiled insinuation that what he has done from high principle resulted from motives that cannot bear the light. This is an unpardonable sin that ends friendship.

With all his outward composure, Pitt must have felt deep distress at his failure to complete the Union by the act of grace which he had in contemplation. The time was ripe, indeed overripe, for a generous experiment, whereby seven tenths of the Irish people would have gained religious equality. If the populace of Dublin hailed with joy the St. Patrick's cross on the new Union Jack,[1] we may be sure that Irishmen, irrespective of creed, would have joined heart and soul in the larger national unity which it typified. It is probable that Pitt, when granting the franchise to Irish Catholics in 1793, resolved to make the other concessions at an early date. But the cause of Catholic Emancipation having been prejudiced by the unwise haste of Fitzwilliam in 1795, and by raids and revolts soon after, the time of the Union was the first which he could seize with any chance of success; and he hoped to vitalize that Union by an act which would then have been hailed as a boon. Such acts of grace are all too rare in the frigid annals of British Parliaments. The Anglo-Saxon race builds its political fabric too exclusively on material interests; and the whole structure is the uglier and weaker for this calculating hardness. At the time of the Union with Scotland, the counsellors of Queen Anne utterly failed to touch the hearts of the Scots; and it was left to commerce sluggishly and partially to mingle the two peoples. In contrast with this dullness, how inspiring are the annals of France in the early and best days of the Revolution. Then the separatist Provincial System vanished as a miasma; and amidst the eager hopes and class renunciations of that golden day the French people found a unity such as legislators alone can neither make nor unmake. With the insight of a statesman Pitt now sought to clinch legislation by sentiment. He desired to vivify the Union with Ireland by a concession which would come with all the more graciousness because he had not introduced it into the legal contract of marriage. But the outcome of it all was, for himself resignation, for the two peoples the continuance of their age-long feud.

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[1] "Castlereagh Corresp.," iv, 14.

CHAPTER XXI

PITT AND HIS FRIENDS (1794-1805)

> Nothing could be more playful, and at the same time more instructive, than Pitt's conversation on a variety of topics while sitting in the library at Cirencester. You never would have guessed that the man before you was Prime Minister of the country, and one of the greatest that ever filled that situation. His style and manner were quite those of an accomplished idler.
> —"Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 34.

THE conflict of parties and interests is apt to thin the circle of a statesman's friends; and in that age of relentless strife the denuding forces worked havoc. Only he who possesses truly lovable qualities can pass through such a time with comparatively little loss; and such was the lot of Pitt. True, his circle was somewhat diminished. The opposition of Bankes had been at times so sharp as to lessen their intimacy; and the reputation of Steele had suffered seriously from financial irregularities.[1] Pitt's affection for Dundas and Grenville had also cooled; but on the whole his friendships stood the test of time better, perhaps, than those of any statesman of the eighteenth century. Certainly in this respect he compares favourably with his awe-inspiring father. Not that Pitt possessed the charm of affability. On most persons his austere self-concentration produced a repellent effect; and it must be confessed that the Grenville strain in his nature dowered him with a fund of more than ordinary English coldness. Such was the opinion not only of the French *émigrés*, whom he designedly kept at arm's length, but even of his followers, to whom his aloofness seemed a violation of the rules of the parliamentary game. But it was not in his nature to expand except in the heat of debate or in congenial society. In general his stiffness was insular, his pre-occupation profound. Lady Hester Stanhope, who saw much of him in the closing years, pictures his thin, tall, rather ungainly figure, stalking through Hyde Park, oblivious of all surroundings, with head uptilted, "as if his ideas were *en air*, so that you would have taken him for a poet."[1]

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[1] Wraxall, iii, 458. For Pitt's earlier friendships see my former volume.

The comparison is as flighty as Lady Hester's remarks usually were, though the passage may depict with truth the air that Pitt assumed when walking with her. No one else accused him of having affinities to poets. In truth, so angular was his nature, so restricted his sympathies, that he never came in touch with literary men, artists, or original thinkers. His life was the poorer for it. A statesman should know more than a part of human life; and Pitt never realized the full extent of his powers because he spent his time almost entirely amongst politicians of the same school. His mind, though by no means closed against new ideas, lacked the eager inquisitiveness of that of Napoleon, who, before the process of imperial fossilization set in, welcomed discussions with men of all shades of opinion, and encouraged in them that frankness of utterance which at once widens and clarifies the views of the disputants. It is true that Pitt's private conversations are almost unknown. They appear to have ranged within political grooves, with frequent excursions into the loved domains of classical and English literature; but he seems never to have explored the new realms of speculation and poetry then opened up by Bentham and the Lake Poets. A letter of the poet Hayley to him will serve to suggest the extent of his loss in limiting his intercourse to a comparatively small coterie:

Felpham, near Chichester, *Sept.* 9 [?].[2]

DEAR PITT,

Why are you slow in doing the little good in your power? Yes: great as you are, the real good you can do must be little; but that little I once believed you would ever haste to do with a generous eagerness and enthusiasm, and therefore I used to contemplate your character with an enthusiastic affection. That character, high as it was, sunk in my estimation from the calamitous delay concerning the promised pension of Cowper, a delay which allowed that dear and now released sufferer to sink into utter and useless distraction before the neglected promise was fulfilled. Will you make me some amends for the affectionate concern I suffered for the diminution of your glory in that business by expediting now a pension eagerly but ineffectively solicited by many *great people*, as I am told, for a most deserving woman, the widow of Mr. Green, the consul at Nice? . . . Deserve and receive a kind and constant remembrance in the benedictions of a recluse who has still the ambition to live in your regard by the good which he would excite you to perform. At all events forgive this very unexpected intrusion and importunity from the old and long sequestered admirer of your youth,

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[1] "Mems. of Lady Hester Stanhope," iii, 187

[2] From Mr. Broadley's MSS. Hayley's efforts on behalf of Cowper have been described by Professor E. Dowden, "Essays: Modern and Elizabethan" (1910). Ultimately a pension of £300 a year was assigned to Cowper: the authorization, signed by the King and Pitt, and dated 23rd April 1794, is now in the Cowper Museum, Olney, Bucks, so the secretary, Mr. Thomas Wright (editor of Cowper's Letters), kindly informs me.

W. HAYLEY.

Hayley's letter is a trifle too presumptuous in tone even for an old friend; but it affords one more proof of Pitt's neglect of literary men, though it is but fair to remember that in 1793-4 he was hard pressed by the outbreak of war with France and the struggle to keep the Allies together. Still, the greatest of statesmen is he who, in the midst of world politics, neither neglects old friends, nor forgets the claims of literature and art. In this connection it is painful to add that he allowed the yearly stipend of the King's Painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, to be reduced from £200 to £50. On Reynolds soliciting the secretaryship to the Order of the Bath, he was told that it had been promised to an official of the Treasury. Another request, proffered through his patron, the Duke of Rutland, also proved fruitless, and he had reason to write with some bitterness—"Mr. Pitt, I fear, has not much attention to the arts."[1] His neglect of literature and the arts was the more unfortunate because George III and his sons did not raise the tone of the Court in this respect, witness the remark of the King to Gibbon at a State function. "Well, Mr. Gibbon, it's always scribble, scribble, I suppose."[2]

Apart from these obvious limitations in Pitt's nature, there was a wealth of noble qualities, which ensured life-long devotion from those who penetrated the protective crust and came to know, not the statesman, but the man. In him the qualities that command respect and excite affection were happily balanced. To a manly courage which never quailed in the hour of disaster, and a good sense that provided sage counsels alike in private and public affairs, he added the tenderer gifts. His affection once given was not lightly withdrawn. He looked always on the best side of men, and to that noble failing, if failing it be, most of his blunders may be ascribed. Even when his confidence was abused, he was loth to take revenge, so that Canning expressed regret at his reluctance to punish those who betrayed him.[1] Such a man will often make mistakes, but he will also inspire the devotion that serves to repair them. Moreover, even his opponents were forced to admit the conscientiousness of his conduct. On this topic the testimony of his friend Wilberforce is of value; for they had differed sharply as to the rupture with France in 1793; and, somewhat later, Wilberforce lamented the relaxation of Pitt's efforts against the Slave Trade. Yet their differences did not end their friendship; on 30th November 1797 the philanthropist wrote as follows to Sir Richard Aclom on the subject of the reformation of morals:

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[1] "Rutland Papers," iii, 229, 241 (Hist. MSS. Comm.). Soo, too, Tomline said that Pitt had no ear for music, and little taste for drawing or painting, though he was fond of architecture, and once drew from memory the plan of a mansion in Norfolk, with a view to improving it (Lord Rosebery, "Tomline's Estimate of Pitt," 34).

[2] "Glenbervie Journals," 195.

> . . . There is one point only on which I will now declare we perfectly coincide, I mean, that of a general moral reform being the only real restorative of the health of our body politic. But I hesitate not to say that, tho' the Government is in its system and principle too much (indeed ever so little is, as I think, too much) tainted with corruption, yet it is more sound than the people at large. You appear to feel the disposition of the public to yield an implicit assent to Ministers without stopping to investigate the causes of that disposition (which are chiefly to be found in the violence of the Opposition and the established predominance of party). I will frankly avow no man has lamented this more than myself; I may indeed say more than this. I have endeavoured both in public and in private to fight against it. But selfishness has diffused itself thro' the whole mass of our people, and *hinc illae lacrymae.* You mistakenly conceive, as do many others, that I am biassed by personal affection for Mr. Pitt. When we meet, I will rectify your error on that head. . . .[2]

Again, on 20th February 1798, Wilberforce wrote to William Smith, an active Abolitionist and now prominent in the Opposition, deploring the dilatoriness of Pitt, but maintaining that his patriotism was purer and more disinterested than that of anyone not under the direct influence of Christian principles. He adds these words:

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[1] "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 26; G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 4.

[2] Pitt MSS., 189.

> I speak not this from the partiality of personal affection. In fact for several years past there has been so little of the *eadem velle et eadem nolle* that our friendship has starved for want of nutriment. I really love him for his public qualities and his private ones, though there too he is much misunderstood. But how can I expect that he should love me much, who have been so long rendering myself in various ways vexatious to him, and, above all, when, poor fellow, he never schools his mind by a cessation from political ruminations, the most blinding, hardening, and souring of all others? [1]

These passages explain why the personality of Pitt attracted all that was purest and most patriotic in the public life of England. Men might disagree with particular actions, but they saw in him the saving genius of the State; and this was the dominant feeling until the year 1801 when events scattered his following and reduced public life almost to a state of chaos.

His character, then, was strong in the virtues of steadfastness and loyalty, on which the social gifts can root deeply and bear perennial fruit. Of these he had rich store. His conversations possessed singular charm; for his melodious voice, facile fancy, and retentive memory enabled him to adorn all topics. His favourite themes were the Greek and Latin Classics. The rooms at Holwood or Walmer were strewn with volumes of his favourite authors, on whom he delighted to converse at length. Grenville declared to Wellesley that Pitt was the best classical scholar he had ever met. Yet, with the delicate tact which bade him enliven, not dominate, the social circle, he refrained from obtruding those subjects on occasions when they would be neither known nor appreciated. Equally good was his knowledge of English literature; so that in the company of kindred spirits, the flow of wit and learning, imagination and experience, must have rivalled that of the Literary Club over which Dr. Johnson held sway.

Unfortunately, only the merest scraps survive; but the testimony of Pitt's friends suffices to refute the Whig legend as to his cold and calculating selfishness, which filled even the hours of leisure with schemes for making himself necessary to the King and country.[1] On the contrary, he was fond of society, throwing himself so heartily into the conversation that the *savant* was merged in the wit, the Prime Minister in the genial companion. His jests were of that Attic flavour which seasons without stinging; and this was the outcome, not of calculation, but of a kindly disposition, which delighted to throw off political cares amidst the tide of mirth which he helped to carry to the full. He also felt increasingly the charms of country life, and at Holwood was never more happy than when labouring along with his gardeners in the effort to enhance the beauty of his grounds. This strenuous work, together with horse exercise and occasional bursts with the West Kent or Dover hunt, provided the recreation which enabled his naturally weak and gout-ridden frame to withstand the wear and tear of official life up to his forty-seventh year.

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," ii, 270.

In town he delighted to visit friends in an informal manner, and was never more pleased than when he could have games with children. His romp with young Napier and the two Stanhopes when they succeeded in corking his face, has been already described; but it appears that even in 1805, when beset by manifold cares, he often dropped in at Broom House, Parson's Green, the residence of Sir Evan Nepean, and would "take a chair in a corner, and, laying aside state and gravity, would gambol and play with the boys."[2] At times his repartees were piquant. When his friend and admirer, the Duchess of Gordon, who had not seen him for some time, met him at the *levée* and asked whether he talked as much nonsense as of yore, he laughingly replied: "I do not know whether I talk so much nonsense: certainly I do not *hear* so much."[3]

Is it surprising that a character so benevolent, and social gifts of so much charm, should attract men about him? Of those who came forward to fill the gaps of the circle, only two, Wellesley and Canning, were men of powers so exceptional as to claim more than passing notice. Though descended from families domiciled in Ireland, they differed widely, except in versatility and devotion to Pitt. Wellesley's nature was Saxon in its inner hardness. Like his younger brother, the future Duke of Wellington, he rarely displayed signs of emotion; but his temperament, though cold at the heart, thrilled at the approach of great and perilous enterprises, amidst which he rivalled his brother in activity and resourcefulness. Accordingly, his Viceroyalty of India moved Bonaparte to envy, patriotic Britons to rapturous applause, and the parsimonious Directors of the Company to carping criticisms. Those who deny to Pitt the gift of choosing able and inspiring men, forget that he made Wellesley Governor-General of India, and supported him in his quarrels with the India House. As Earl of Mornington, Wellesley had helped the Irish Administration in various ways, and became closely acquainted with the Grenvilles. His first letter to Pitt, dated Dublin, January 1785, expresses thanks for assistance and for the offer of support in case the annoyances of his situation drove him to England. Thus, Mornington was first attracted to Pitt by his loyalty to subordinates; and, later, after his return to England, respect for the Minister ripened into admiration and love of the man.

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[1] The estimate of Pitt by Wellesley, summarized above, refutes the ungenerous remark of Lecky (v, 72) that he took little delight in books and "was a politician, and nothing more." Lecky was perhaps misled by the ignorant libel on Pitt in Wraxall, iii, 223.

[2] "Diary of D. Scully," quoted by Dr. Hunt, "Transactions of Royal Hist. Soc." (1908), p. 12.

[3] Lord Rosebery, "Tomline's Estimate of Pitt," 33.

They had much in common. Manly in bearing, persistent of purpose, and prompt in decision, they were also richly dowered with social gifts. Like Pitt, Mornington had classical attainments and literary gifts of no mean order; and his high spirits and powers of repartee must have brought new energy to the jaded statesman. Entering Parliament as member for Windsor, he found his duties far from congenial. On some occasions nervousness marred the effect of his speeches; and his constituents involved him in so much expense and worry as to prompt a request, in the autumn of 1794, for the intervention of Pitt, seeing that his rival, Isherwood, had "the means of supplying the rapacity even of the electors of Windsor." On 4th October he thanked Pitt for relieving him from further obligations to "the worthy electors of that loyal borough"; but he continued for a time to sit in Parliament. Meanwhile his fine presence and lively converse brought him into favour with the Prince of Wales. On 4th August 1793, writing at Brighthelmstone, he heartily congratulated Pitt on the surrender of Valenciennes, which sanguine persons hoped might hasten the end of the war. But, he added, "I own my most sanguine expectations cannot reach the notion of our being able to bring down the power of

France in one campaign to the level to which I think it must be reduced for our safety and for that of the rest of the world. H.R.H. the Prince of Wales has been pleased to be most gracious to me. . . . I suppose you have heard of his dinner on the capture of Valenciennes. We sat from five till half-past ten, and many were very drunk, particularly H.R.H. He really did the honours most admirably. . . ." In the next letter, of the early part of August 1796, Mornington sends a quatrain of Latin Elegiacs which he had composed at Dundas's house, on the exploits of Wurmser in relieving Mantua, of Davidovitch at Roveredo, and Quosdanovitch at Brescia (not Verona), which seemed to presage the ruin of Bonaparte.

Mantua Vurmisero gaudet, Rovereda Davido,
  Et Verona tibi, Quosdanovice, patet.
Vae mihi (raptor ait Gallus) ne forte per Alpes
  Heu! Bona pars in rem cogar abire malam.[1]

For some time Mornington had felt the charm of Indian history; and the blend of energy with romance in his being may have prompted Pitt's selection of him as Viceroy in 1797. After a most tedious voyage he reached the Hooghly in time to foil the blow which Tippoo Sahib, Bonaparte's prospective ally, aimed at Madras. In his letter to Pitt, written there on 20th April 1799, he expressed a hope of the capture of Seringapatam, and continues thus: "I assure you that my nerves are much strengthened by all the exertions which I have been obliged to make, and in this land of indolence I pass for rather an active, stout, hardy fellow and can now fast till four o'clock (save only a bit of biscuit and a glass of port). I am happy to hear that you are better than you have ever been in your life. There is no comfort in mine but the distant hope of seeing you all again safe, well, and quizzing in England. I have only one request to make to you if you do not mean to abridge either my doleful days or the period of my Government—do not suffer that *cantancerous* [*sic*] fellow, Sir J[ames] Craig, to be made commander-in-chief in Bengal. Send me a sober discreet decent man, but do not allow the etiquette of throwing inkstands to be revived at the Council Board."[2]

[1] *I.e.*, Mantua rejoices in Wurmser, Rovereda in Davidovitch, Verona is open to Quosdanovitch. "Woe is me," says the greedy Gaul, Bonaparte, "I shall have to be off through the Alps and go to the dogs."

[2] Pitt MSS., 188.

On 12th May, after announcing to Pitt the capture of Seringapatam, Mornington adds: "If Buonaparte should now chuse to visit Malabar, I think he will find supper prepared for him before he has reached Calcutta." Reviewing the events of his Viceroyalty he writes on 8th August: "I suppose you will either hang me or magnificently honour me for my deeds (mine they are, be they good or bad). In either case I shall be gratified; for an English gallows is better than an Indian throne; but these words must be buried in your own breast; for here I pretend to be very happy and humble; although I am as proud as the D. and as wretched as his dam. I think you will enjoy 'Le Citoïen Tipou' and 'Citoïen Sultan' in the papers found at Seringapatam. I admire your conduct with respect to the Union [with Ireland]. I hope you will persevere, but I *trust* you will not *trust* Ireland to my old friend Hobart. He used to be a good humoured fellow; but from what I have heard of his reign here, he is utterly unfit to govern anywhere."[1]

Pitt did not receive this letter by 6th November, when he informed Wellesley that the King, as a mark of high approbation, conferred on him the title the Marquis Wellesley, suitable arrangements being also in contemplation for his family. An Irish marquisate was far from the magnificent reward which the Viceroy desired; and on 28th April 1800 he expressed his anguish of mind at receiving only an Irish and pinchbeck reward for exploits neither Irish nor pinchbeck. Nevertheless, while requesting a speedy recall so that he might hide his chagrin in retirement, he uttered no vindictive word against Pitt. Despite its morbid expressions, the letter is that of a friend to a friend. On 27th September Pitt wrote in reply one of the longest of his private letters. With equal tact and frankness he reviewed the whole question, proving that Wellesley's services were not undervalued, that the bestowal of an English marquisate would have been an advance of four steps in the peerage for what was after all a short Viceroyalty; and that the present honour equalled that conferred on Cornwallis at the end of his term. The question was whether Wellesley should receive an English earldom or an Irish marquisate; and the latter was deemed preferable. Further, if the notion prevailed at Calcutta that Wellesley had been slighted, it might be due to a suspicion that he himself harboured it. Pitt then begged Wellesley to regard this frankness as the best proof of real friendship.[1]

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[1] Pitt MSS., 188. Hobart married Pitt's early love, Eleanor Eden, and became Minister at War under Addington. For Mornington's comments on his factious conduct at Madras, see "Dropmore P.," iv, 384, 476; v, 268; vi, 338.

Wellesley showed his good sense by acquiescing, and their letters though rare, became thoroughly cordial. Writing at Patna on 6th October 1801, he gently reproached Pitt for his long silence, especially for not explaining the reason of his resignation; he also expressed the hope that he approved his remaining at Calcutta until a successor was appointed. He added that his state progress up the Ganges to Patna had been favoured by an easterly gale of unusual strength which the natives ascribed either to his happy star or to an Order in Council. As for his health, it was better than in "the reeking House of Commons." Again at the beginning of 1804 he expressed regret that Pitt had neither written nor vouchsafed any sign of approbation at recent events, including the victory of Assaye, which assured British ascendancy in the East.

At last, on 30th August 1804, three months after resuming office, Pitt apologized for his neglect on the ground of excess of work in preparing to meet a French invasion, in which he had so far succeeded as to hope that the attempt might be made. At that time he expected Wellesley to come home in order to escape the petty cabals of the Company's Directors; but he left the decision entirely to him. Pitt's next letter, at Christmastide, breathes a profound hope for Wellesley's speedy arrival as a means of lightening the then heavy burden of political life. Wellesley, however, on 25th March 1805, announced his chivalrous resolve to remain in India another season owing to financial troubles and disputes with the Company. To Dundas, in May 1805, he wrote: "I imagined myself to be one of the best friends of the Company, but I hear that I am a traitor, and a conspirator, and an interloper. Time discovers truth, and I must leave the Honourable Courts' opinions to that test."[2] In August, after transferring his duties to Cornwallis, he set sail for England, and landed in time to have a few last words with Pitt. The interview must have been deeply affecting. At its conclusion Pitt fainted away. Of all the estimates of Pitt none breathes deeper devotion than that of Wellesley. Was it not because he at last saw the pettiness of his own pride and petulance when contrasted with the self-abnegation of him who was truly the Great Commoner? And did not even his meteoric career in the East pale before the full-orbed splendour of the quarter of a century of achievement which made up the public life of Pitt?

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[1] Stanhope, iii, 232; Rosebery, "Pitt," 213-7.

[2] Pitt MSS., 188.

The other enthusiastic friend was typically Irish in temperament. Celtic in vivacity and charm, feminine in sensitiveness, Canning was dowered with virile persistence and pugnacity. In histrionic and versifying power he rivalled his countryman, Sheridan, who never forgave him for deserting the Whigs and going over to Pitt. The loss was indeed serious; for the young orator was far more than a *frondeur*. As editor of the "Anti-Jacobin," conjointly with Hookham Frere, he covered with ridicule the detractors of their country, and helped on the revival of national spirit which began in 1798. But he also possessed great administrative talents, displaying as Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs an insight into character in which his chief, Grenville, was signally lacking. Canning's letters to Pitt on the negotiation at Lille in 1797 show signs of those inductive powers which appear at their zenith in his brilliantly correct inference ten years later that the Danish fleet must be snatched from the clutch of Napoleon.

The statuesque calm of Pitt's personality charmed and overawed this impressionable Irishman from the time of their first interview in the summer of 1792. Always versatile and sometimes shifty, he seems instinctively to have felt in him the needed counterpart. As the Czar Alexander leaned on the rock-like Stein in the crisis of 1812, so Canning gained strength and confidence from reliance on Pitt. He on his side took a keen interest in his disciple, discerning in him the propagator of the Pitt doctrine and tradition. At times the fostering care became fatherly. A case in point was Canning's marriage with a wealthy Scottish heiress (July 1800). Pitt regarded this event as essential to his success as the future leader of the party. Indeed, so absorbed was he in his own thoughts during the ride to the church as not to notice a pert remark of Canning's friend, Hookham Frere. The clergyman, Frere, and he were in a coach driving along Swallow Street towards Brook Street when a carter who saw them called out: "What! Billy Pitt! and with a parson too!" Thereupon Frere burst out with the daring jest, "He thinks you are going to Tyburn to be hanged privately!" But Pitt was too pre-occupied to notice the gibe. Again, after the ceremony, in the vestry Pitt was so nervous as to be unable to sign as a witness, and Canning had to whisper to Frere to sign without waiting for him.[1] They ascribed his strange inaction to extreme regard for Canning. But surely another explanation is more natural. How could a man of keenly affectionate nature share in that ceremony without feeling deeply his own lonely lot? Three and a half years ago poverty and debt had stepped in to part him and Eleanor Eden. Was it not the wraith of his buried love which now hovered before him, blotting out the sight of the carter, deafening his ears to the jest, and palsying his hand?

Pitt's resignation of office sorely tried his friends; for, without informing them of the inmost reasons that prompted that step, he pressed them to remain in office under his successor, Addington. As we have seen, some of them refused. Of those not holding Cabinet appointments, Rose and Long, joint Secretaries of the Treasury, Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, a Lord of the Treasury, and Canning, joint Paymaster of the Forces, decided to resign. Pitt's silence and his urgent requests to his friends to remain in office were of course open to misconstruction; and several of his supporters echoed the malicious assertion of Frere, that his aim was for Addington to take office as a *locum tenens*, and sign a discreditable peace, whereupon he (Pitt) would come back to power and find his former supporters in their old places. Malmesbury gave colour to the story by stating that Addington described himself as *locum tenens*, a remark utterly inconsistent with all that is known of his complacent pride. Nevertheless the slander gained general currency, and, even now, despite convincing refutation, dies hard. That Canning and others resented Pitt's silence and his pressure to remain in office is undeniable; but, while saying nothing as to the cause of his own conduct, he explained clearly to Canning that, as a friend, he was gratified by his conduct in resigning, however much he deplored his action on public grounds. Of course the *tu quoque* retort was inevitable; but Canning's curiosity was not gratified.[2]

For a time he talked of breaking with Pitt, and sent him a copy of a letter to Frere couched in those terms. Pitt replied calmly on 26th April 1801 that on reviewing his conduct he found it neither unkind nor unfair. While lamenting that Canning should thus have misunderstood his conduct, he expressed a resolve to forget the incident and a hope that their friendship might endure. Serenity such as this is the best cure to Celtic susceptibility. But other grievances were discovered, and on 12th July Canning dashed off to Frere a furious missive full of dashes and underlinings, charging Pitt with showing to him "confidence just enough to mislead and not enough to guide"; on which promising theme he fired off clause upon clause of an incoherent sentence which fills thirty-five lines of print and then expires in a dash. What it was all about is far from clear, except that Canning believed Pitt to have done "scrupulously and magnanimously *right* by everybody but *me*."[1] Before long the sensitive youth was moving heaven and earth to bring back Pitt to power. But, even in December 1803, when his whole soul was bound up in him, he reproached him with lover-like vehemence for having inspired a derogatory article in the "Accurate Observer." Apparently the wounded friend had no proof whatever that Pitt had sped or barbed the shaft.

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[1] Gabrielle Festing, "J. H. Frere and his Friends," 31.

[2] "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 8; Pellew, i, ch. xi; G. Festing, "Hookham Frere," 42-4; R. Bell, "Canning," 176; H. W. V. Temperley, "Canning," 62-3.

Among those who won Pitt's confidence in his closing years was Spencer Perceval, an able young barrister, who entered Parliament in 1796 as member for Northampton, and showed considerable skill in finance and debating powers of no mean order. "He spoke (says Sinclair) without the disagreeable cant of the Bar, was never tedious, was peculiarly distinct in matters of business, and explained his financial measures with clearness and ability. His style was singularly acute, bold, sarcastic, and personal." The same authority avers that Pitt, on being asked—"If we lose you, where could we find a successor?"—answered at once, "Perceval." The reply is remarkable; for Perceval, besides opposing Catholic Emancipation, displayed little tact in dealing with men and a strangely narrow outlook. Probably it was his power of hard work, his grasp of finance, and his resolute disposition which led Pitt to prefer him to Canning, who in other respects was far better qualified to act as leader.

I must here notice charges which have been brought against Pitt, that his creations of peers, or promotions in the peerage, which by the year 1801 exceeded 140, were fraught with evil to the Upper House, lowering the intellectual level of its debates, and impairing the balance of parties, with results damaging to the constitution.[1] It has even been suggested that the friction between the two Houses in the years 1830-1911 resulted in no small degree from the reckless conduct of Pitt in this respect. Vague and sweeping assertions like these can neither be substantiated nor refuted. But the only definite part of them, namely, that Pitt's creations degraded the House of Lords, is obviously overstrained. At no period was the tone of its debates higher than in that of Pitt's supremacy, witness those on Warren Hastings, the disputes with Spain and Russia, and the Great War. They have not the brilliance of those of the Commons in the days of Burke, Fox, Pitt and Sheridan; but they often excel them in statesmanlike qualities; and a perusal of them reveals the fact that the ablest of the Lords were, not those of the old governing families, which at that period showed signs of decadence, but those for whose creation Pitt was mainly responsible. Malmesbury, Buckingham, Grenville, Auckland, Carrington, Minto, and at a later period, Sidmouth and Castlereagh, excelled in ability and weight the representatives of the older nobility. Far from degrading and weakening the peerage, Pitt strengthened it by an infusion of new blood which was sorely needed at that time of strain and stress. Further, it must be remembered that Burke's Economy Bill had abolished many of the sinecures which were considered due for steady support in Parliament; and, while at Bath in the year 1797, he admitted that his reform was accountable for the large increase of peerages, thenceforth the chief hope of the faithful.[2] Pitt's correspondence also shows that he frequently repulsed the insistent claims of his supporters for titles, a theme on which piquant letters might be adduced.

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[1] Stanhope, iii, 315; Festing, 47-51.

Surely, too, it is unjust to say that Pitt entirely altered the political complexion of the Upper House. During the greater part of his career the so-called political differences were based mainly on personal considerations; and throughout the struggle against France, Whigs and Tories, with the exception of a small coterie, were merged in the national party which recognized in Pitt the saviour of British institutions. The charge that he was largely responsible for the friction between the two Houses after 1830 needs little notice; for that friction was clearly due to the progress of democratic principles and the growth of an enormous industrial community in these islands. Both of those developments told strongly against the parity of political influence of the two Houses of Parliament. Amidst the torpor of the previous age the prerogatives of the Peers had gone unchallenged. After the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution a challenge was certain to come; and in this, as in many other respects, the conduct of Pitt was such as to strengthen our institutions. By adding to the House of Lords a considerable number of commoners he enabled it to withstand the storms of the Revolutionary age and the inevitable conflicts of the future.

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[1] May, "Constit. Hist.," i, 232-8; Lecky, v, 27.

[2] Wraxall, ii, 286.

To revert to the year 1801, there occurred early in the autumn an event of high import. The struggle of eight years between Great Britain and France ended in stalemate. The collapse of the Armed Neutrality League together with the capture of Malta and the surrender of the French garrisons in Egypt left the Union Jack triumphant at sea and the tricolour on the Continent. Each State had need of rest to restore its finances and consolidate its conquests. Therefore, though Bonaparte had at the end of March 1801 sharply repelled the pacific overtures of the Addington Cabinet, yet negotiations were resumed at the close of summer, a fact which proves that the First Consul was influenced, not by spite to Pitt and goodwill to his successor, but by the constricting grip of the Sea Power. Hawkesbury, Grenville's successor at the Foreign Office, asserted that shortly before the end of the negotiation Pitt sat up with him through part of a night discussing finance, and finally advising the cessation of hostilities.

Not that Pitt directed the negotiations; for both Addington and Hawkesbury were proud and sensitive men, and Pitt at some points criticized the conditions of the Preliminaries of London (1st October 1801). They were as follows: Great Britain agreed to restore to France, Spain, and the Batavian, or Dutch, Republic all their possessions recently conquered by her, with the exception of Trinidad and Ceylon, ceded to her by Spain and the Dutch respectively. She also retired from Elba and restored Malta to the Knights of St. John, under conditions to be further specified. The French restored Egypt to the Sultan, and evacuated Naples and the Papal States. Portugal was also saved from danger of partition. Nothing was said respecting the resumption of trade between England and France; and no assurance was forthcoming as to the independence of the Republics bordering on France. By his recent compact with Austria the First Consul agreed to respect their independence; but England had no definite ground for complaint if it were violated.

While the London rabble shouted itself hoarse with joy at the advent of peace, Grenville, Windham, and Canning saw disgrace and disaster ahead. Pitt thought otherwise. At the small house in Park Place which he had leased for his visits to London, he wrote to Long on 1st October, describing the terms as not all that could be wished but "highly creditable, and on the whole very advantageous." Finding that Grenville considered them disastrous, he on the 5th expressed concern at their disagreement. Though regretting the surrender of the Cape, and the uncertainty of the fate of Malta, he considered the acquisition of Ceylon and Trinidad most beneficial; and he hailed with satisfaction a peace which saved Turkey and Portugal from spoliation. He therefore suggested an interview for the sake of reconciling their differences. To this Grenville somewhat coolly assented, remarking that the differences were fundamental and could not be concealed, and that his confidence in the Addington Cabinet was irretrievably destroyed by a treaty which ceded to France Martinique, Malta, Minorca, the Cape, Cochin China, and all the Dutch settlements. Clearly, then, Grenville looked on the Dutch Republic and Spain as dominated by Bonaparte, who would seize Minorca, Malta, and the Cape whenever it suited him. He also wrote to the King expressing regret that he could no longer support Addington, whose conduct towards France and Russia was "marked throughout by a tone of unnecessary and degrading concession."[1]

Here, then, the two cousins began sharply to differ. On 3rd November, during the debates on the Peace, Pitt rose to rebut the censures of Thomas Grenville on a policy which implied the surrender of the Mediterranean to France. He deprecated these sweeping criticisms; for he had ever been ready to frame a treaty which, though falling short of our just pretensions, was not inconsistent with honour and security. The present terms did not fulfil all his wishes; but the difference between them and the best possible terms was not worth the continuance of war. If both Trinidad and Malta could not be retained, he commended Ministers for choosing Trinidad; for the sight of the Union Jack at Malta would have hurt the pride of France. With regard to the Cape of Good Hope he deemed it a far more important possession than Hawkesbury had represented, though inferior to Ceylon. He deplored our failure to restore the House of Savoy to its capital, Turin; but the chief object of the war, the security of Great Britain, had been attained. True, the restoration of the French monarchy would have furnished a better safeguard for peace; but we had never insisted on it as essential, though it might have been assured if the Allies had fulfilled their duties. As to the future, if the First Consul aimed at founding a military despotism, he probably would not select England as the first object of his attack; and we had every prospect of enjoying a long peace. Remembering, perhaps, that he made the same prophecy early in 1792, he uttered this warning: "I am inclined to hope everything that is good; but I am bound to act as if I feared otherwise." In none of his speeches did Pitt display less foresight. The preference of Trinidad to Malta and of Ceylon to the Cape is curious enough; but the prophecy as to a long period of peace and the probable immunity of England from Bonaparte's attack argues singular blindness to the colonial trend of French policy since the year 1798. Despite acrid comments by Fox and Windham, the speech carried the day and firmly established Addington in power.

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[1] Stanhope, iii, 352; "Dropmore P.," vii, 49-51. For new letters of Canning and Grenville see "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters."

The sequel is well known. In the interval of six months, during which the aged and gouty Cornwallis sought to reduce the Preliminaries of London to the Treaty of Amiens (27th March 1802), Bonaparte remodelled the Batavian, Ligurian, and Cisalpine Republics in a way wholly at variance with the Treaty of Lunéville. Against these breaches of faith the Addington Cabinet made no protest; and the treaty in its final form provided a complex and unsatisfactory compromise on the Maltese question.[1] Canning and Windham strove to elicit from Pitt a public expression of his disapproval of the treaty; but their efforts were in vain. On 20th April 1802 Canning, while at his country seat, South Hill, Bracknell (Berks), wrote thus to Windham:[2]

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[1] See Rose, "Life of Napoleon," i, ch. xiv, for details.

[2] B.M. Add. MSS., 37844.

. . . Do not suppose that this is because I have the slightest doubt as to the impression which may be made by pointing out the gross faults and omissions, the weakness, and baseness, and shuffling, and stupidity, that mark this Treaty even beyond the Preliminaries that led to it. But I think people do not want to be convinced of this; that they will not take it kindly, but rather otherwise, to have it forced upon their observation; that, if parted to a division, they will vote for the Treaty with all its imperfections upon its head. . . . Now as to Pitt himself. He cannot and does not think of this as he did of the Preliminary Treaty. But debate it; and he will, he must, debate as warmly for it. He can take no distinction without seeming to abandon Addington; and that he will not do. He cannot object to any part of the Peace in public, without weakening the grounds upon which he contends peace upon the whole to be preferable to war, and *that* he will not do. . . . Leave it possible for Pitt to say six or eight months hence that the Preliminaries promised well, but that the Treaty did not come up to them. I do not promise you that he ever will say this. But I am fairly persuaded that, if you force from him a public approbation of the Treaty, you defer for at least as many months as have passed since the debates of October, the chance of his coming to see things almost as you and I see them. . . .

April 27 1802.

Since I wrote to you, I have seen Lord Grenville, and I think the plan of action, which he tells me had been concerted between you and him, so perfect, that I retract everything in what I wrote to you (if anything there were) which could be construed as making against it. To debate "about it and about it," as much as you will, to move for papers, to move for taking the Treaty into consideration—all this may be done with great and good effect, but a condemnation of the Treaty, such as would force P[itt] into a defence of it, and identify him with the makers of it, is what of all things is to be avoided. I hope you think so.—Whether P[itt] *will* save us I do not know. But surely he is the only man that *can*.

All was in vain. Pitt, having promised to support Addington, deemed himself in honour bound to fulfil that pledge. But, as the events of the year 1802 showed more and more the imbecility of the Addington Cabinet, torturing doubts preyed upon his mind. His friends, especially Canning, now began to discern the pathos of his position, but sought to draw him from his seclusion at Walmer. An opportunity occurred in the month of May. Pitt's birthday was on the 28th. Would not all who foresaw ruin for England in the supremacy of "the Doctor" welcome a demonstration on behalf of his predecessor? For more than a year Pitt's friends had been puzzled and abashed by his unexplained retirement, witness the uncharitable surmise of the usually benevolent Dr. Burgh—"Can I see Addington climb upon the stooping neck of Mr. Pitt, and not believe that it is done in hostility or in a masked confederacy? If the former, how am I to estimate the man who comes in? If the latter, what judgement can I form of the man who goes out?"[1] Slander also was busy in the guise of that gadfly, Nicholls, who proposed to thank the King for dismissing him. By way of retort Pitt's friends triumphantly carried a motion of thanks to Pitt for his great services, against a carping minority of fifty-two; but members were heard to mutter their preference for Addington over all "the d—d men of genius."

Was it not time to arouse the country from sloth? The England of 1802 seemed to Wordsworth

> a fen of stagnant waters.

While he invoked the memory of Milton, Canning resolved to appeal to Pitt. In a day or two he threw off a poem which, though slighted by him, gained a wider vogue than any of his effusions, "The Pilot that weathered the Storm." The last and best stanza is as follows:

> And O! if again the rude whirlwind should rise,
> The dawning of peace should fresh darkness deform,
> The regrets of the good and the fears of the wise
> Shall turn to the pilot that weathered the storm.

The song was enthusiastically received by the company assembled at the Merchant Taylors' Hall; and the reference to the recall of Pitt roused the company to a high pitch of excitement. The song, as a whole, is laboured and strained. The only stanza which happily weds phrase and thought is the last. The others form a lumbering prelude to this almost Sibylline cadence.

Despite these efforts to sow discord between Pitt and Addington, they remained on excellent terms;[2] and the support given by the former to the Peace of Amiens ensured to the Minister an overwhelming victory at the polls in the General Election of the summer of 1802. Pitt was of course returned by the University of Cambridge, "with every mark of zeal and cordiality"—so he wrote to Rose on 10th July. The rest of the summer he passed either near London or at Walmer. It is unfortunate that he did not visit France, as Fox, Romilly, and many others now did. Probably his sharp rebuff to Bonaparte's overture at the end of 1799, and his subsequent diatribes against him precluded such a step. But he also needed rest and quiet. On 8th June he wrote to Windham: "The sea air and the contrast of the scene to that which I left behind me in London have, as usual, done me a great deal of good."[1] He set to work to improve the grounds adjoining the castle, and invited Addington, who was then spending some weeks at Eastbourne, to come over and see the changes. Further, he leased a large farm near Walmer, and expressed a hope that he might spend the rest of the year in farming. The splendour of that summer and the bounteous crops of corn evidently captivated Pitt. The supreme need of England was more corn. A man who could not serve her at Westminster could serve her by high farming. This was Pitt's forecast, unless "the *pacificator* of Europe takes it into his head to send an army from the opposite coast to revenge himself for some newspaper paragraph."[2]

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[1] "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 110.

[2] For the passing misunderstanding of February 1802, see Pellew, ii, 489-92, with Pitt's letters.

At this time, too, he finally succeeded in disposing of Holwood. The sale was inevitable; for Pitt's finance had long been a source of deep anxiety. So far back as 18th October 1800 Rose informed the Bishop of Lincoln that bailiffs threatened the seizure of Pitt's furniture in Downing Street for debts of £600 and £400. Then, referring to Pitt's ill health, he wrote: "I conceived till this morning [it] was owing to the state of public matters; but I am now strongly inclined to think he is agitated by the state of his own affairs. Bullock came to me this morning and forced upon me such a history of debts and distresses as actually sickened me. . . . Something must be done before Pitt returns to town. His expenses in the last years were nearly £26,000. I am quite certain Holwood must be parted with."[3]

Pitt's private finance is involved in mystery. His official stipend was £6,000 a year; and as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports he drew £3,000 more. Yet he was now insolvent. Among

[1] B.M. Add. MSS., 37844.

[2] Pellew, ii, 75, 76.

[3] Pretyman MSS. Bullock paid the servants and supervised the accounts at Downing Street. Pitt was then staying with Addington near Reading.

his papers systematic accounts are extant only for the latter half of the years 1794 and 1799. Even these are not complete, especially for the household at Walmer Castle. Those for the house in Downing Street are the fullest; but, for the last six months of 1799, they amount to £3,789 at Downing Street, and £2,382 at Holwood, the latter sum including a charge of £1,163 for farm expenses which cannot much have exceeded the income.[1] The Walmer accounts vary according to the duration of Pitt's residence. Those for the summer and autumn of 1794 amount only to £458. Evidently, then, Pitt benefited by the King's gift of the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports. But he gave £1,000 in 1793 to start the Dover Volunteer corps and doubtless other sums towards the Fencibles of the other Cinque Ports.

At all times the servants at Downing Street and the farm at Holwood were a heavy drain. The amount of the servants' private bills charged to Pitt at Downing Street is disgraceful. Pitt kept a good table and a good cellar, as the customs of the age required; but neither these expenses nor his heavy outlay on his tailor would have brought about a crisis, had not his town servants and tradesmen plundered him. Morse, the tailor, charged at the rate of £130 to £140 a quarter for Pitt's clothes. Now Pitt was neat and punctilious in his attire, but he was no dandy. As for the farm at Holwood, accounts for straw and manure were charged twice over, as some friendly accountant pointed out. Probably, too, his experiments in landscape-gardening were as costly as they had been to Chatham; for lavishness was in the nature both of father and son. Pitt once confessed to his niece, Hester Stanhope, that he never saw a house and grounds without at once planning improvements. In this phrase as in the suggestive item on farm expenses we can see why the sale of Holwood was necessary; but for various reasons it did not take place until the autumn of 1802.

Meanwhile his friends bestirred themselves to prevent the scandal of an execution. They succeeded in staving off a crisis until schemes of relief were concerted, but here again there was much difficulty; for, on hearing of the proposed private subscription on his behalf, he declared that he would rather return to practice at the Bar than submit to such a humiliation. Fox might allow friends to pay his gambling debts; but the pride of Pitt scorned to accept help on behalf of liabilities even if due to pre-occupation in public affairs. Rose deemed a sum of £25,000 necessary to his peace and quietness, seeing that the total liabilities were £45,064. The letters which passed between Camden, the Bishop of Lincoln, and Rose, evince deep affection for the shy, proud man. The following is a *précis* of a letter of Rose to Tomline which is among the Pretyman MSS.:

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[1] Omitting shillings, the details for Downing Street and Holwood for July—December 1799 are respectively: Table, £344, £231; Cellar, £169, £126; Housekeeping, £531, £156; Private Account, £357, £—; Servants' Wages, £251, £69; Servants' Board Wages, £329, £80; Servants' Bills, £353, £15; Liveries, £41, £—; Taxes, etc., £747, £77; Farm, £—, £784; Farm Labourers, £—, £379; Garden, £—, £125; Stable, £155, £—; Job Horses, £165, £—; Incidentals, £347, £340. (Pitt MSS., 201.)

Christchurch, *July* 21, 1801.

I am in great perplexity about Pitt's affairs. Joe Smith has been strangely misled respecting them.[1] The unforeseen demands have been very large. If Holwood fetches a good price, the sum of £24,000 will set the matter at rest. Pitt's diamonds have been sold for £680 to pay pressing claims. The unpaid bills now amount to £9,618. Old debts come to £9,600 more. Mr. Soane and Mr. Coutts might be asked to wait, as neither would suffer from it. The debt due to Banker (£5,800) cannot surely be a separate one of Pitt's; for I think he could give no security on it. Probably it is a debt contracted jointly with Lord Chatham, the whole of which Pitt may have to pay. Of the last sum which in his own deep distress he borrowed on the security of Holwood, he gave (I know) £1,000 to Lord Chatham. These are trifling considerations compared with that of getting him to accept the means of relief. They are as follows: (1) a vote from Parliament; (2) a free gift from the King; (3) a private subscription; (4) an additional office for life. The first and second of these Pitt has peremptorily declined. The third he refused in 1787 when the London merchants offered £100,000. The fourth course would not be wholly creditable, but Pitt thinks it the least objectionable. He dislikes the second and third alternatives because the second (as he thinks) would give the King a hold over him and the third would entitle the subscribers to his favour. The notion of an execution by bailiffs in his house is too painful to contemplate. I consider the first or second alternatives the best.

The reference here to a gift, or loan, from Pitt to his brother prompts the inquiry whether similar acts of benevolence may not explain his difficulties. We find the second Earl of Chatham in August 1797 acknowledging a loan of £1,000 from Pitt. The bishop, replying to Rose on 24th July 1801, states that the debt of £5,800 was to the best of his knowledge a sum advanced through Thomas Coutts, the banker, to Lady Chatham upon the Burton Pynsent estate. He adds that she ought to pay interest to Pitt upon it, but did not. It seems that Pitt advanced £11,750 in all on behalf of the Burton Pynsent estate. Here, then, was a grievous family burden. Probably the debt was left by his father, and may have been increased by his mother. So far back as November 1793 he wrote to her stating his desire to help her at any time of need; and in August of the following year, when she believed her end to be near, she begged her sons to pay her "just debts," which were due, not to vain expenses, but to outlays upon the farm which she at the time believed to be for the best.[1] The eldest son could not help her, for he required succour from Pitt. If, then, the farming experiments at Burton Pynsent failed, the loss fell upon Pitt. We may infer, then, that his debts were occasioned partly by rapacious servants and tradesmen in London, partly by farming and gardening at Holwood, but also by the needs of his mother and brother. The fact that Chatham paid not a shilling towards the discharge of Pitt's liabilities proves that he was in low water; and as no one, not even Tomline, knew of the source of Pitt's embarrassments, they must have been of a peculiarly delicate character.

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[1] Joseph Smith (no relative of "Bob Smith," Lord Carrington) became Pitt's private secretary in 1787. His letters, published along with "The Beaufort Papers" in 1897, throw no light on Pitt's debts.

Tomline's decision, that Pitt could never accept a sinecure from Addington, is indisputable. The words in which Pitt declared that he could not accept the sum of £30,000 graciously offered by the King breathe more independence than those in which he first expressed his gratitude for the offer. There remained, then, the plan of a private subscription. The Bishop of Lincoln mentioned it to him with admirable delicacy on 6th August 1801, and gained his consent. The following were the subscribers: Lords Bathurst, Camden, and Carrington, together with Tomline, Rose, and Steele, £1,000 each. From Scotland came £4,000, probably in equal parts from the Dukes of Buccleugh and Gordon, Dundas, and the Chief Baron. Wilberforce, Long, and Joseph Smith each gave £500, and another (Lord Alvanley?) £200. Bishop Tomline and Rose showed equal activity and tact in raising this sum of £11,700, so that the details remained unknown to Pitt.[1] Later on he felt pecuniary embarrassments, partly owing to his share in maintaining the Cinque Ports Volunteers, and at his death his debts amounted to £40,000.

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[1] Ashbourne, 162. See, too, ch. xv of this work.

His relations to his bankers, Messrs. Coutts, continued cordial, though on 24th April 1805 Thomas Coutts ventured to state that there was an overdraft against him of £1,511, which, however, was redressed by the arrival of his quarterly official stipends.[2] Pitt's loyalty to his friends appears in his effort during his second Ministry to procure the royal assent to his nomination of Bishop Tomline to the Archbishopric of Canterbury shortly after the death of Dr. Moore early in 1805. The King, however, who did not admire Tomline, and believed the Bishop of Norwich to have prior claims, refused his reiterated requests. Pitt's second letter to the King on this subject is couched in terms almost of remonstrance.[3]

Reverting to Pitt's life at Walmer, we find that in the summer of 1802 he fell a prey to nausea and lassitude; so that Lady Hester Stanhope, who visited him in September, found him very weak. Probably his indisposition was due less to the exceptional heat of that season than to suppressed gout aggravated by anxiety. As we saw, he invited Addington to come over from Eastbourne and discuss public affairs. The conference seems to have caused him much concern; for Tomline in July 1802 jotted down notes of a conversation with Pitt, in which Addington is described as "without exception the vainest man he (Pitt) had ever met with." Pitt's advice had often been asked before the Preliminaries of Peace were signed, but afterwards he was neglected. Cornwallis, too, had evidently believed that by the Treaty of Amiens all former treaties with France were revived without being named; and probably Ministers were under the same delusion. The last King's Speech was also annoying to Pitt, who characterized Addington as "a man of little mind, of consummate vanity and of very slender abilities." As to resumption of office Pitt thought it impossible during the life of the King, except in case of some great emergency.[4]

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[1] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 429; ii, 215.

[2] Pitt MSS., 126. Coutts and five other bankers each subscribed £50,000 to the "Loyalty Loan" in 1797 and invested £10,000 on behalf of Pitt.

[3] Stanhope, iv, 233, 252; Ashbourne, 351-4.

[4] Pretyman MSS.

Equally frank were Pitt's confessions to Canning, who stayed at Walmer in September—October 1802. He admitted that his resignation was due partly to the manner in which the King opposed him on Catholic Emancipation. But he quitted office with a clear conscience, leaving full means for attacking Egypt and the Armed Neutrals, so that the reproaches of desertion of duty were unjust. He pledged himself to support Addington; and from this only Addington could release him. He admitted that this was a mistake, now that current events showed Bonaparte's ambition to be insatiable; but none the less he waved aside Canning's reiterated appeals that he would apply to Addington for release from the pledge, on the ground that such a step would seem an intrigue for a return to power. "My ambition (he proudly said) is character, not office."

Was a statesman ever placed in a more embarrassing situation? Pitt had resigned office on a point of honour, and yet felt constrained to humour the royal invalid by abandoning the very measure which caused his resignation. Incautiously he pledged himself to support Addington, thereby alienating some of his own supporters. He defended his pacific policy until it led to a bad treaty followed by a series of humiliations. By October 1802 Bonaparte was master of four Republics bordering on France, and had annexed Piedmont and Elba, besides securing Parma and Louisiana by profitable exchanges. Such a peace was worse than a disastrous war. Yet Addington made no protest except against the virtual subjugation of Switzerland. True, the Cabinet now clung to the Cape and Malta as for dear life; but elsewhere the eye could see French influence creeping resistlessly over Europe, while the German Powers were intent only on securing the spoils of the Ecclesiastical States. Well might Pitt write to Wilberforce on 31st October: "You know how much under all the circumstances I wished for peace, and my wishes remain the same, if Bonaparte can be made to feel that he is not to trample in succession on every nation in Europe. But of this I fear there is little chance, and without it I see no prospect but war." Worst of all, there were sure signs that France and the other Powers distrusted and despised Addington. Vorontzoff, the Russian ambassador, declared that he would work hard to form an alliance with Pitt, but despaired of effecting anything with his successor.[1] In truth, Pitt's excessive scrupulousness at

[1] "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 34; G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 508.

the time of his resignation had enclosed himself and his country in a vicious circle from which the only means of escape was war.

A prey to these harassing thoughts, Pitt left Walmer near the close of October 1802 to take the waters at Bath. On the way he visited Sir Charles Middleton at Teston in Kent, and sought distraction by inquiries on farming. Middleton wrote to Wilberforce on 26th October: "His inquiries were very minute and judicious; and it is incredible how quickly he comprehended things, and how much further he reasons on them than I can follow him. . . . I believe Mr. Pitt has it in his power to become the first farmer in England if he thinks the pursuit worth his time and attention."[1] The treatment at Bath suited Pitt so well that he prolonged his stay. Rose, whom he invited to Bath in the second week of November, thus describes to Bishop Tomline his manner of life:

Bath, *Nov.* 21, 1802.[2]

Mr. Pitt's health mends every day: it is really better than it has been ever since I knew him. I am quite sure this place agrees with him *entirely*, he eats a small [*illegible*] and a half for breakfast, and more at dinner than I ever saw him at ½ past 4: no luncheon: two very small glasses of Madeira at dinner and *less* than a pint of port after dinner: at night, nothing but a bason of arrowroot: he is positively in the best possible train of management for his health. . . . He is positively decided to have no responsibility whatever respecting what has been done or is doing on the subject of foreign politics; he not only adheres to his resolution of not going up for the opening [of Parliament]; but will not attend even on the estimates unless a necessity should arise: he writes to day both to Mr. Addington and Lord Hawkesbury in a style that will not only manifest the above, *but will prevent all further attempts to draw him into confidential communication.* He has also made up his mind to take office again whenever the occasion shall arise, when he can come in properly, and has now no reluctance on the subject. I dare not say more by the Post. If my letter is opened, the Ministers will know the first part is true, and I don't care about their learning the latter. Lord Grenville will positively not take a line to render it difficult for Mr. Pitt and him to act together; he will move no amendment to the Address. . . .

Rose, as we have seen, disliked Lord Auckland, who was joint Postmaster-General; and if Pitt's letters were opened at the

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[1] "Letters of Wilberforce," i, 256.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

Post Office, we can understand the thinness of his correspondence.[1] Recently he had advised Addington not to retain Alexandria, Malta, Goree, and Cape Town, but to trust rather to defensive preparations, which might include a friendly understanding with other aggrieved Powers. This surely was the dignified course. Even Malta was not worth the risk of immediate war unless we were ready both with armaments and alliances. The foregoing letter, however, shows that Pitt believed his advice to be useless. Possibly he heard that the Cabinet had decided to retain those posts; and finally, as we shall see, Pitt approved their action in the case of Malta. Meanwhile matters went from bad to worse. Ministers complained of Pitt's aloofness; but his friends agreed that he must do nothing to avert from Addington the consequences of his own incompetence. Even the cold Grenville declared Pitt to be the only man who could save England. But could even he, when under an incompetent chief, achieve that feat?

For by this time Addington had hopelessly deranged the nation's finance. While giving up Pitt's drastic Income Tax, which had not brought in the expected £10,000,000 but a net sum of £6,000,000, he raised the Assessed Taxes by one third, increased Import and Export duties with impartial rigour, and yet proposed to raise £5,000,000 by Exchequer Bills, which were to be funded at the end of the Session or paid off by a loan. This signal failure to meet the year's expenses within the year exasperated Pitt. At Christmas, which he spent with Rose at his seat in the New Forest, he often conversed on this topic; and his host thus summed up his own conclusions in a letter to Bishop Tomline:

Cuffnells, *December* 24, 1802.[2]

. . . There is hardly a part of the Budget that is not too stupidly wrong even for the doctor's dullness and ignorance. I am sure Mr. Pitt must concur with me; and I have all the materials for him.—Wrong about the increase of the revenue; wrong as to the produce of the

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[1] Auckland, while ambassador at The Hague, was suspected of too great inquisitiveness as to the British despatches which passed through that place. On 20th July 1790, Aust, of the Foreign Office, wrote to Sir R. M. Keith at Vienna that Keith's new cipher puzzles "our friends at the Hague," and that Auckland's curiosity is "insatiable" (B.M. Add. MSS., 35543). See, too, a note by Miss Rose in G. Rose "Diaries," ii, 75.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

Consolidated Fund; scandalously wrong as to what is to be expected from it in future by at least £2,800,000 a year; wrong as to the money he will want this year by millions. . . .

During his stay at Cuffnells Pitt received a letter from Addington urging the need of an interview. Viewing the request as a sign of distress with which he must in honour comply, Pitt agreed to stay a few days early in January 1803 at the White Lodge in Richmond Park, which the King had for the time assigned to his favoured Minister. Addington described him as looking far from well, though his strength had improved and his spirits and appetite were good.[1] Apparently Pitt found the instruction of his host in finance a subject as dreary as the winter landscape. He afterwards told Rose that Addington mooted his entrance to the Cabinet awkwardly during their farewell drive to town. But this does not tally with another account, which is that Pitt, on the plea of winding up the transfer of Holwood, suddenly left the White Lodge on 6th January. On the 11th he wrote from Camden's seat, The Wilderness, in Kent, that his views on foreign affairs were nearly in accord with those of the Cabinet, but that he failed to convince Addington of his financial error.

This, then, was still the rock of offence. Nevertheless, Pitt begged Rose not to attack the Cabinet on that topic, as it would embarrass him. If it were necessary on public grounds to set right the error, he (Pitt) would do so himself on some fit occasion. Malmesbury and Canning did their utmost to spur him on to a more decided opposition; and the latter wrote him a letter of eight pages "too admonitory and too fault-finding for even Pitt's very good humoured mind to bear."[2] Pitt replied by silence. In vain did friends tell him that Ministers had assured the King of his intention to bring forward Catholic Emancipation if he returned to office. In vain did Malmesbury declare that Pitt must take the helm of State, otherwise Fox would do so. In vain did Rose predict the country's ruin from Addington's appalling ignorance of finance. Pitt still considered himself in honour bound to support Addington. At the close of January he held friendly converse with him, before setting out for Walmer for a time of rest and seclusion. Canning's only consolation was that Bonaparte would come to their help, and by some new act of violence end Pitt's scrupulous balancing between the claims of national duty and of private obligations. The First Consul dealt blow upon blow. Yet even so, Canning's hopes were long to remain unfulfilled. As we saw in the former volume, the relations of Pitt to Addington had for many years been of an intimate nature; but occasions arise when a statesman ought promptly to act upon the maxim of Mirabeau—"*La petite morale est ennemie de la grande.*" In subordinating the interests of England to the dictates of a deep-rooted but too exacting friendship, Pitt was guilty of one of the most fatal blunders of that time.

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[1] Pellew, ii, 113. Lord Holland, writing early in 1803 to his uncle, General Fox, then at Malta, says that there are three parties in Parliament, besides many subdivisions, "Grenville and Windham against peace and nearly avowed enemies of the present Government; the old Opposition; and Addington [*sic*]. Pitt, as you know, supports Addington, but the degree of intimacy and the nature of his connection with Ministers are riddles to every one." (From Mr. Broadley's MSS.)

[2] "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 168; G. Rose, "Diaries," ii, 6-9; Pellew, ii, 113.

CHAPTER XXII

ADDINGTON OR PITT?

Once more doth Pitt deem the land crying loud to him—
Frail though and spent, and an hungered for restfulness
Once more responds he, dead fervours to energize
Aims to concentre, slack efforts to bind.
THOMAS HARDY, *The Dynasts*, Act i, sc. 3.

ON 30th January 1803 there appeared in the "Moniteur" the official Report of Colonel Sebastiani, Napoleon's envoy to the Levant. So threatening were its terms respecting the situation in Egypt and Corfu, that the Addington Ministry at once adopted a stiffer tone, and applied to Parliament for 10,000 additional seamen and the embodying of the militia. But the House, while readily acceding on 9th March, evidently wanted not only more men but a man. The return of Pitt to power was anxiously discussed in the lobbies. The Duke of Portland and Lord Pelham strongly expressed their desire for it. Yet Pitt remained at Walmer, feeling that he could not support financial plans fraught with danger to the State. Addington therefore resolved to sound him again with a view to his entering the Cabinet as a coadjutor. The envoy whom he chose for this delicate mission was Henry Dundas, now Lord Melville. He could count on his devotion; for, besides nominating him for the peerage, he is said to have opened to his gaze a life of official activity and patronage as First Lord of the Admiralty in place of the parsimonious and unmannerly St. Vincent.[1] Pitt received his old friend at Walmer with a shade of coolness in view of his declaration, on quitting office, that he could accept no boon whatever from Addington. To come now as his Cabinet-maker argued either overwhelming patriotism or phenomenal restlessness.

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[1] Addington desired the retirement of St. Vincent. See "Dropmore P.," vii, 121: Stanhope, iv, 21.

Nevertheless, the two friends resumed at Walmer the festive intercourse of the Wimbledon days; and in due course, after dinner and wine, Melville broached the subject of his visit. It was that Addington, who was First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, should resign the latter office to Pitt, and take Lord Pelham's place as Secretary of State for Home Affairs. We can picture the astonishment and wrath of Pitt as this singular proposal came to light. At once he cut short the conversation, probably not without expletives. But Melville was pertinacious where patriotism and office were at stake; and their converse spread over the two days, 21st-22nd March, Melville thereupon sending a summary of it to Addington, couched in terms which Pitt deemed too favourable. The upshot was that on personal grounds Pitt desired not to return to office; and, if affairs were efficiently conducted, would prefer to continue his present independent support. If, however, the misleading statements of the Treasury were persisted in, he must criticize them. Above all, if he returned to office it must be as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

But Addington, foreseeing that Pitt would claim his two former offices, had concocted a sovereign remedy for all these personal sores. Pitt was to take office as Chancellor of the Exchequer, serving under his brother, the Earl of Chatham, as Prime Minister. Is it surprising that he negatived this singular proposal "without reserve or affectation"? By way of retort to this family prescription he charged Melville to point out the absolute need of the Cabinet being under the control of "the First Minister," who must not only have the confidence of the King and administer the finances, but also in the last resort impose his will on his colleagues. For himself he declared he would never come forward unless bound by public duty and with the enjoyment of the fullest confidence of the King.[1] There is a discrepancy between Melville's letter to Addington and a short account given by Pitt to Wilberforce two years later, to the effect that Melville, on cautiously opening his proposals at Walmer, saw that it would not do and stopped abruptly. "Really," said Pitt with a sly severity, "I had not the curiosity to ask what I was to be."

Such was the bomb-shell exploded on Addington's bureau on

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[1] Pellew, ii, 114-6.

23rd March. It must have cost him no less concern than Bonaparte's outrageous behaviour to our ambassador, Lord Whitworth, ten days before. That scene before the diplomatic circle at the Tuileries portended war. How would Addington and his colleagues behave in this crisis? Would they sink all personal feelings, and, admitting that they could not weather the storm, accept the help and guidance of long tried navigators? Or would they stand on their dignity and order the pilot-boat to sheer off? Clearly it was a case where half measures were useless. The old captain and his chosen subalterns must command the ship. Pitt made this clear during conversations with Addington at Long's house at Bromley Hill (10th April). While declaring that he would not urge any point inconsistent with His Majesty's intentions, he demanded that Grenville, Melville, Spencer, and Windham should enter the Cabinet with him on the clearly expressed desire of the King, and at the request of the present Ministry. The last conditions seem severe. But Pitt's pledge to Addington made it essential that the Prime Minister should take the first step. To these terms two days later Addington made demur, but promised to communicate them to his colleagues; whereupon Pitt declared that he had said the last word on the matter; and when Ministers objected to Grenville and Windham, he was inexorable.[1] That their anger waxed hot against him appears from the following letter sent to Pitt by Lord Redesdale, formerly Sir John Mitford, and now Lord Chancellor of Ireland, who had been with Pitt and Addington at their conferences at Bromley:

Albemarle St., *April* 16, 1803.[2]

What passed yesterday and the day before at Bromley Hill, has made so strong an impression on my mind that I have been unable to relieve myself from the anxiety which it has occasioned. However you may flatter yourself to the contrary, it seems to me most clear that your return into office, with the impression under which you have appeared to act, must have the effect of driving from their situations every man now in office, and making a greater change than has ever been made on any similar occasion. I think myself as one of those persons individually intitled to call upon your honour not to pursue the line of conduct which you seem determined to adopt. The present Administration, so far from having been formed in hostility to you, was avowedly formed of your friends. When you quitted office, you repeatedly declared that you should consider yourself as obliged to those friends who would continue in office or would accept office under Mr. Addington. You must recollect that I expressed to you my disapprobation of the change and my wish to retire to my situation at the Bar, quitting the office of Attorney-General; and that you used to me these words—"That you *must* not do, for my sake." The words were too strongly impressed upon my mind at the moment to have escaped my memory. You encouraged me to take the office of Speaker much against my will. If I had not taken that office, nothing should have induced me to take that in which I am now placed, and by which I have been brought into a position of much anxiety, separated from all my old friends. Many many others are in similar situations, and all are to be sacrificed to those men who were said by yourself at the time to be acting in contradiction to your wishes in quitting their offices or those who dragged you out of office with them. You will probably tell me that you have no such intentions, particularly with respect to myself. But, whatever may be your intentions, such must be the unavoidable consequence of the changes which you have determined upon. I thought, when I took a situation under the Administration at the head of which you placed Mr. Addington, that I was doing you service. It was of no small importance to you, whether you looked to a return to office, or to retirement from public life, that the Government should not fall into the hands of those who had been engaged in violent opposition to you; and you yourself stated to me that you apprehended that must be the consequence if Mr. Addington should not be able to form an Administration. . . . Some of your last words to me induce me to think that you have not yourself abandoned the plan formed for giving to the Roman Catholic Church full establishment in Ireland—for such I consider the plan suggested by Lord Castlereagh, with any modification of which it is capable. Indeed, if all those who went out of office because that measure was not approved then (such being the ostensible cause of their quitting their stations) are to come into office again, there can be no doubt in the mind of the public that it is determined to carry that measure. . . .

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[1] "Lord Colchester's Diaries," i, 415. Pellew, ii, 121-4.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

That at so critical a juncture a supporter of Addington, not of Cabinet rank, should rake up personal reasons why Pitt should let things drift to ruin is inconceivable. And did Redesdale really believe Protestantism to be endangered by Pitt's return to office, after his assurance at Bromley that he would not press any point at variance with the royal resolves? The

King, who knew Pitt far better than Redesdale did, had no fear that he would belie his word by bringing forward Catholic Emancipation. But the phrases in the letter quoted above show that some of the Ministers were preparing to beat the drum ecclesiastic, and, in the teeth of the evidence, to charge Pitt with ingratitude and duplicity if he became Prime Minister. Ignoring the national crisis, they concentrated attention solely on the personal questions at issue; and it is humiliating to have to add that their petty scheming won the day. A compromise between Pitt and Addington was exceedingly difficult, but their reproaches and innuendoes made it impossible.[1]

The outcome was disastrous. The failure to form a strong and truly national Administration ended all hope of peace. Over against Addington set Bonaparte; with Hawkesbury compare Talleyrand; with Hobart, Berthier.[2] The weighing need go no further. The British Ministry kicks the beam; and in that signal inequality is one of the chief causes of the war of 1803. The first Consul, like the Czar Alexander I, despised the Addington Cabinet. He could not believe that men who were laughed at by their own supporters would dare to face him in arms. Twice he made the mistake of judging a nation by its Ministers—England by Addington in 1803, Spain by Godoy in 1808. Both blunders were natural, and both were irreparable; but those peoples had to pour forth their life blood to recover the position from which weakness and folly allowed them to slide. Politics, like meteorology, teaches that any sharp difference of pressure, whether mental or atmospheric, draws in a strong current to redress the balance. Never were the conditions more cyclonic than in 1803. A decade of strife scarcely made good the inequality between the organized might of France and the administrative chaos of her neighbours; between the Titanic Corsican and the mediocrities or knaves who held the reins at London, Vienna, Berlin, and Madrid.

War having been declared on 18th May 1803, Pitt sought the first opportunity of inspiriting Parliament and the nation. On the 23rd a great concourse crowded the House in the hope of hearing him speak; and cries of "Pitt, Pitt" arose as he strode to his seat on the third row behind Ministers, beside one of the pillars. The position gave point to a remark of Canning to Lord Malmesbury, that Pitt would fire over the heads of Ministers, neither praising nor blaming them, but merely supporting the policy of the war. Such was the case. Replying to a few criticisms of Erskine, he defended the Cabinet and powerfully described the unbearable aggressions of the First Consul.

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[1] G. Rose, "Diaries," ii, 156; "Lord Colchester's Diaries," i, 416, 417; Pellew, ii, 119-28.

[2] Hawkesbury's remissness (so Vorontzoff told Rose) then lost an opportunity of gaining the friendly mediation of the Czar (G. Rose, "Diaries," ii, 43, 157). Romilly ("Mems.," i, 427) calls the Ministry a thing of no account in comparison with Pitt, and says it was universally despised.

The speech aroused a patriotic fervour which cannot be fully realized from the meagre and dreary summary of it which survives. Romilly pronounced it among the finest, if not the very finest, which he had ever made;[1] and Sheridan, in a vinous effusion to Lady Bessborough, called it "one of the most magnificent pieces of declamation that ever fell from that rascal Pitt's lips. Detesting the dog, as I do, I cannot withhold this just tribute to the scoundrel's talents." There follows a lament over Pitt's want of honesty, which betokens the maudlin mood preceding complete intoxication.[2] On the morrow Fox vehemently blamed the Cabinet in a speech which, for width of survey, acuteness of dialectic, wealth of illustration and abhorrence of war, stands unrivalled. Addington's reply exhibited his hopeless mediocrity; but, thanks to Pitt, Ministers triumphed by 398 votes to 67. As they resented the absence of definite praise in his speech, he withdrew to Walmer, there to serve his country and embarrass his finances by raising the Cinque Ports Volunteers.

Before recounting Pitt's services in East Kent, I must mention a bereavement which he had sustained. His mother died, after a very short seizure, at Burton Pynsent on 3rd April 1803. Thus was snapped a link connecting England with a mighty past. A quarter of a century had elapsed since her consort was laid to rest in the family vault in Westminster Abbey; she followed him while the storm-fiends were shrouding in strife the two hereditary foes; and the Napoleonic War was destined to bring her gifted son thither in less than three years. The father had linked the name of Pitt with military triumphs; the son, with futile efforts for peace and goodwill; but the lives both of the war-lord and of the would-be peacemaker were to be ended by tidings of national disaster.

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[1] Romilly Memoirs, i, 427.

[2] Sichel, "Sheridan," i, 440. Spencer Stanhope declared Pitt's speech the finest he ever heard. His wife wrote to their son: "He (Pitt) spoke for two hours, but unless he can be prevailed upon to give it himself, as the shorthand-writers were excluded, the speech will be lost for ever. Your father thinks it will be made out by some of his friends and submitted to his inspection; therefore, tho' we may lose much, we shall not lose the whole" (A. M. W. Stirling, "Annals of a Yorkshire House," ii, 282).

> No parleying now. In Britain is one breath;
> We all are with you now from shore to shore;
> Ye men of Kent, 'tis victory or death!

We all know these lines of Wordsworth. Do we know equally well that on Pitt, as Lord Warden, fell the chief burden of organization on the most easily accessible coast, that which stretches from Ramsgate to Rye?[1] It was defenceless but for the antiquated works at Sandown, Deal, Walmer, Dover, and a few small redoubts further west. Evidently men must be the ramparts, and Pitt sought to stimulate the Volunteer Movement, which now again made headway. He strove to make it a National Movement. At the close of July he sent an official offer to raise 3,000 Volunteers in Walmer and its neighbourhood; and he urged Ministers to have recourse to a *levée en masse*, whereupon Yorke, Under Secretary at War, proposed a scheme somewhat on those lines. Probably the encouragement offered to Volunteers was too great; for, while they were required to do less than was necessary to ensure efficiency, they were freed from all risk of compulsory enrolment in the Militia. This force and the Army consequently suffered, while the Volunteer Associations grew apace. On 27th October 1803 the King reviewed in Hyde Park as many as 27,000 of the London Volunteers and showed his caustic wit by giving the nickname of "the Devil's Own" to the Inns of Court Volunteers.

Pitt was not present on this occasion, he and his neighbour, Lord Carrington, on whom in 1802 he bestowed the command of Deal Castle, being busy in organizing the local Volunteers. As Constable of Dover Castle, Pitt summoned the delegates of the Cinque Ports to meet him there to discuss the raising of local corps; and he gave the sum of £1,000 towards their expenses. Dover contributed £885; Sandwich, £887; Margate,

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[1] "Dumouriez and the Defence of England against Napoleon," by J. H Rose and A. M. Broadley.

£538, and so on. As Lord Warden, he also took steps to secure a large number of recruits for the new Army of Reserve, and he further instructed local authorities to send in returns of all men of military age, besides carts, horses, and stock, with a view to the "driving" of the district in case of a landing.[1] At Walmer he kept open house for officers and guests who visited that coast. By the end of the year 1803 more than 10,000 Kentishmen had enrolled as Volunteers, and 1,040 in the Army of Reserve, exclusive of Sea Fencibles serving on gunboats. For the whole of Great Britain the totals were 379,000 and 31,000 respectively.[2] Pitt's joke at the expense of a battalion which laid more stress on privileges than drills, has become historic. Its organizers sent up a plan containing several stipulations as to their duties, with exceptions "in case of actual invasion." Pitt lost patience at this Falstaff-like conduct, and opposite the clause that they were on no account to be sent out of the country he wrote the stinging comment—"except in case of invasion."

The pen of Lady Hester Stanhope gives life-like glimpses of him during the endless drills between Deal and Dover. She had fled from the levelling vagaries of Earl Stanhope at Chevening to Lady Chatham at Burton Pynsent; but that home being now broken up, Pitt offered to install her at Walmer Castle. He did so with some misgiving; for her queenly airs and sprightly sallies, however pleasing as a tonic, promised little for comfort and repose. But the experiment succeeded beyond all hope. She soon learnt to admire his serenity, while his home was the livelier for the coming of this meteoric being. Her complexion was dazzlingly bright. Her eyes, usually blue, would flash black, as did those of Chatham in moments of excitement. Her features, too, had a magical play of expression, lighting up at a pleasing fancy, or again darting forth scorn, with the April-like alternations that irradiated and overclouded the brow of her grandsire. Kinglake, who saw her half a century later in her Syrian fastness, was struck by the likeness to the Chatham of Copley's famous picture.

Certainly she had more in common with him than with the younger Pitt. During the time when she brought storm and sunshine to Walmer, Park Place, and Bowling Green House, she often rallied her uncle on showing undue complaisance to the King or to stupid colleagues whom the Great Commoner would have overawed. Pitt laughingly took the second place, and at times vowed that when her voice rang with excitement, he caught an echo of the tones of his father.[1] Perhaps it was this which reconciled him to her vagaries. For her whims and moods even then showed the extravagance which made her the dreaded Sultana of that lonely Syrian castle where she ended her days amidst thirty quarrelsome but awe-struck servants, and an equal number of cats, over whom an apprehensive doctor held doubtful sway.

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[1] Lyon, "Hist. of Dover," p. xxxiii.

[2] Hansard, i, 1899-1902.

But that bitter, repining, spirit-haunted exile was far different from the joyous creature who shed light on Pitt. Her spasmodic nature needed his strength; her waywardness, his affectionate control. As for her tart retorts, terrifying to bores and toadies, they only amused him. In truth she brought into his life a beam of the sunshine which might have flooded it had he married Eleanor Eden. Hester soon found that, far from being indifferent to the charms of women, he was an exacting judge of beauty, even of dress. In fact, she pronounced him to be perfect in household life. His abilities in gardening astonished her; and we may doubt the correctness of the local legend which ascribes to her the landscape-gardening undertaken in the grounds of Walmer Castle in 1803. The dell at the top of the grounds was Hester's favourite haunt.

The varied excitements of the time are mirrored in her sprightly letters. Thus, on 15th November 1803, she wrote at Walmer:

> We took one of their gunboats the other day: and, as soon as she came in, Mr. Pitt, Charles,[2] Lord Camden and myself took a Deal boat and rowed alongside of her. She had two large guns on board, 30 soldiers and 4 sailors. She is about 30 feet long, and only draws about 4 feet of water; an ill-contrived thing, and so little above the water that, had she as many men on board as she could really carry, a moderate storm would wash them overboard. . . . Mr. Pitt's 1st battalion of his newly-raised regiment was reviewed the other day by General Dundas, who expressed himself equally surprised and pleased by the state of discipline he found them in. . . . I like all this sort of thing, and I admire my uncle most particularly when surrounded with a

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[1] "Mems. of Lady Hester Stanhope," i, 174.

[2] Lady Hester's second brother.

tribe of military attendants. But what is all this pageantry compared with the unaffected simplicity of real greatness!

Walmer Castle, *Nov.* 19, 1803.

To F. R. Jackson, Esq.

To express the kindness with which Mr. Pitt welcomed my return and proposed my living with him would be impossible; one would really suppose that all obligation was on his side. Here then am I, happy to a degree; exactly in the sort of society I most like. There are generally three or four men staying in the house, and we dine eight or ten almost every other day. Military and naval characters are constantly welcome here; women are not, I suppose, because they do not form any part of our society. You may guess, then, what a pretty fuss they make with me. Pitt absolutely goes through the fatigue of a drill sergeant. It is parade after parade at 15 or 20 minutes' distance from each other. I often attend him; and it is quite as much as I am equal to, although I am remarkably well just now. The hard riding I do not mind, but to remain almost *still* so many hours on horseback is an incomprehensible bore, and requires more patience than you can easily imagine. However, I suppose few regiments for the time were ever so forward; therefore the trouble is nothing. If Mr. Pitt does not overdo and injure his health every other consideration becomes trifling. [She then states her anxiety on this score. She rarely speaks to him on it, as he particularly dislikes it. She adds:] I am happy to tell you, sincerely, I see nothing at all alarming about him. He had a cough when I first came to England, but it has nearly or quite left him. He is thin, but certainly strong, and his spirits are excellent. . . . Mr. Pitt is determined to remain acting colonel when his regiment is called into the field.

On this topic Pitt met with a rebuff from General (afterwards Sir John) Moore, commander of the newly formed camp at Shorncliffe, near Folkestone. Pitt rode over from Walmer to ask his advice, and his question as to the position he and his Volunteers should take brought the following reply: "Do you see that hill? You and yours shall be drawn up on it, where you will make a most formidable appearance to the enemy, while I with the soldiers will be fighting on the beach." Pitt was highly amused at this professional retort; but at the close of 1804 his regiment was pronounced by General David Dundas fit to take the field with regulars. Life in the open and regular exercise on horseback served to strengthen Pitt's frame; for Hester, writing in the middle of January 1804, when her uncle was away in London for a few days, says: "His most intimate friends say they do not remember him so well since the year '97. . . . Oh! such miserable things as these French gunboats. We took a vessel the other day, laden with gin—to keep their spirits up, I suppose." Bonaparte was believed to be at Boulogne; and there was much alarm about a landing; but she was resolved "not to be driven up country like a sheep."

This phrase refers to the arrangements for "driving" the country, that is, sweeping it bare of everything in front of the invaders. The plans for "driving" were thorough, but were finally pronounced unworkable. His efforts to meet the Boulogne flotilla were also most vigorous. On 18th October 1803 he informs Rose that he had 170 gunboats ready between Hastings and Margate to give the enemy a good reception whenever they appeared. He adds: "Our Volunteers are, I think, likely to be called upon to undertake permanent duty, which, I hope, they will readily consent to. I suppose the same measure will be recommended in your part of the coast [West Hants]. I wish the arrangements for defence were as forward everywhere else as they are in Hythe Bay under General Moore. We begin now to have no other fear in that quarter than that the enemy will not give us an opportunity of putting our preparations to the proof, and will select some other point which we should not be in reach of in the first instance." On 10th November he expresses a hope of repelling any force that attempted to land in East Kent, but fears that elsewhere the French cannot be stopped until they arrive disagreeably near to London.[1]

It is clear, then, that Pitt was not dismayed by the startling disparity of forces. On the coast of Flanders and Picardy were ranged regular troops amounting to 114,554 men seemingly ready for embarkation on an immense flotilla of small craft, part of which was heavily armed. It is now known that these imposing forces were rarely, if ever, up to their nominal strength; that part of the flotilla was unseaworthy; that the difficulties of getting under way were never overcome; and that the unwieldy mass would probably have been routed, if not destroyed, by the cruisers and gunboats stationed on the Kentish coast. Still, even if part of it made land, the crisis would be serious in view of the paucity and want of organization of the British forces. As bearing on this subject, a letter of Lord Melville to a relative deserves quotation:

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[1] G. Rose, "Diaries," ii, 70-2; Desbrière, "Projets de Débarquement," iii, 98-105; Wheeler and Broadley, "Napoleon and the Invasion of England," ii, ch. 14; Cornwallis ("Corresp.," iii, 500) thought ill of our chances if the French landed, but he doubted if they could. (*Ibid.*, iii, 503.)

> "Dunira, 16 *Dec.*, 1803.[1]
>
> "DEAR ALEXANDER,
>
> "I received your letter from Walmer and was extreamly happy to learn from it that Mr. Pitt was in such excellent health. Long, I pray, may it continue. He has been very usefully and creditably employed, but not exactly in the way his country could have wished; but that is a subject on which I never now allow myself to think. . . . If Mr. Pitt, from what he feels within himself or from the enthusiasm he may have inspired in those he commands, conceives that the defence of the country could at any time be safely entrusted with the Volunteers alone, as the newspapers seem to convey as his sentiments, he is by much too sanguine. On the other hand it is talking wildly, or like old women, to contend, as Mr. Windham and Mr. Fox do, that great bodies of Britains [*sic*], with arms in their hands and trained to the use of them, are not a most important bulwark of security to the Empire. My opinion, however, lays perhaps in the middle, and I would have greatly preferred a much smaller number to have secured more effectually their uniform efficiency. I would much rather have had 200,000 on the footing of Lord Hobart's first letter in June than double that number selected and formed in the loose and desultory manner they have more recently been under the variety of contradictory orders they have since received and by which Government have annoyed every corner of the country." Melville adds that they would be useful if thoroughly trained and not allowed to leave their corps; but exemptions from the Militia and Army of Reserve ballots granted to the recent Volunteer Corps are mischievous, and interfere with the recruiting. The Militia is unnecessarily large and interferes with recruiting for the regular army. He would have enough trained troops at home to be able to send abroad "50,000 infantry for offensive operations either by ourselves or in co-operation with such European Powers as may recover their senses, as sooner or later they must and will do."

Pitt did not leave his post for long, except when high winds made an invasion impossible. At such times he would make a trip to London. A short sojourn in town in the early spring elicits from Lady Hester the words: "I cannot but be happy anywhere in Mr. Pitt's society"; and she hoped that she helped to amuse and entertain him. Certainly Pitt did his utmost to enliven her stay at the little residence at Park Place. In the Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne, who claims to have known her well, we catch a glimpse of Pitt acting as *chaperon* at balls which obviously bored him. Yet he would patiently wait there until, perhaps, four a.m., when Lady Hester returned to end his *ennui*. Is it surprising that after his death she called him that adored angel?

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[1] Pitt MSS., 157.

Early in the year 1804 a ministerial crisis seemed at hand. The personal insignificance of Ministers, the hatred felt for St. Vincent at the Admiralty, the distrust of Hobart at the War Office, and the deep depression caused by the laboured infelicities of Addington's speeches presaged a breakdown. So threatening was the outlook that Grenville urged Pitt to combine with him for the overthrow of an Administration which palsied national energy. For reasons which are far from clear, Pitt refused to take decisive action. During his stay in London in mid-January he saw Grenville, but declined to pledge himself to a definite opposition. Grenville and his coadjutors, among them Lord Carysfort, were puzzled by this wavering conduct, which they ascribed to *finesse*, pettiness, or even to insincerity.[1] But it is clear that Pitt objected only to their proposed methods, which he termed a teasing, harassing opposition. In vain did the Bishop of Lincoln, who came to town at Pitt's request, seek to reconcile their differences. The most to be hoped for was that Pitt would be compelled by force of circumstances to concert a plan with the Grenvilles for Addington's overthrow. The following letter of Carysfort to the bishop is of interest:

Jan^{y}. 18, 1804.[2]

Lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt being agreed upon so material a point as the necessity of removing Mr. A[ddington] from his present situation, it must be a matter not only of regret but of surprise, that they should not be able to reconcile any difference of opinion between them as to the sort of opposition to be carried on in Parliament; and I cannot help thinking that Mr. Pitt's avowal that he intends opposition would in itself be sufficient to incline (not merely Lord Grenville and his friends, who have made it a principal object to be united with Mr. Pitt and place him again at the head of affairs) but all the parties who may mean to oppose, to leave the mode pretty much at his option! . . . [Your letter] leads me to think that Mr. Pitt and he may not have understood each other. Lord Grenville's attachment to Mr. Pitt has been so conspicuous, and I am persuaded his communications have been so frank and so explicit, that I cannot account for Mr. Pitt using any reserve with him, and must be of opinion that greater openness, where there is such solid ground of confidence, would lead to more satisfactory results. [Lord Carysfort then says that Pitt should not keep public opinion so long in suspense; for] the public danger from a Ministry confessedly incapable is already great and urgent and will be continually increasing.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," vii, 193, 196.

[2] Pretyman MSS. It is in answer to the one referred to in "Dropmore P.," vii, 209.

Failing to get help from Pitt, Grenville, at the end of January, sought the help of Fox! Through his brother, Thomas Grenville, as go-between he offered the Whig leader his alliance for the overthrow of Addington and the formation of a Ministry of the talented men of all parties. Here, then, is the origin of the broad-bottomed or All the Talents Administrations which produced so singular a muddle after the death of Pitt. The Fox-Grenville bargain cannot be styled immoral like that of Fox and North in 1782; for it expressly excluded all compromise on matters of conviction. Nevertheless it was a tactical mistake, for which Pitt's exasperating aloofness was largely responsible. Few occurrences in this time of folly and blundering were more untoward. Pitt's letter of 4th February to Grenville shows that he discerned the magnitude of the error, little though he saw his own share in it. The result of the union of Fox and Grenville was likely to be the fall of Addington, an appeal of the King to him (Pitt) to form a Cabinet, which would be narrowed and weakened by the present effort of Grenville to form a strong and comprehensive Administration.[1]

Presumably the national crisis was not yet acute enough to satisfy Pitt that he might conscientiously oppose Addington. But that he was drifting to this convicton appears in the following letter from Rose to the Bishop of Lincoln.

Feb. 11, 1804.[2]

I showed Mr. Pitt your letter because it expressed so entirely my own view of the interesting subject: he appeared at first against anything like hostility, but I think is now disposed to point out pretty strongly the neglect of proper measures of defence in the naval and military departments and to suggest the necessary ones; so [as] to throw on the Government the just responsibility and odium of rejecting them if they shall determine to do so.

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[1] "Dropmore P.," vii, 211-14.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

Rose then states that the Bishop of St. Asaph calls the new Volunteer Bill "the most wishy-washy thing that ever was produced." He also adds that the King is ill, probably of dropsy. The fact was even worse. A chill caught in drenching rain developed into the former mental malady. Thus the nation was for a time kingless, leaderless, and open to a deadly thrust from Boulogne. For a short time his life was in danger, and all the troubles of a Regency loomed ahead. The Prince of Wales having ventured on the compromising prophecy that the illness "*must* last several months," Pitt quoted to his informant, Malmesbury, the damning line

> Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought.

In truth, there now began a series of intrigues, in which the Prince, Fox, and the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire played the leading parts, for assuring a Regency and the formation of a Fox Administration. While England needed to keep her gaze on Boulogne, the intriguers thought only of the death or lunacy of the King, the accession of the Prince and the apportionment of the spoils of office. Sheridan on this occasion played his own game and for this was heartily cursed by the expectant Creevey.[1]

In view of these last complications and the prospect of an invasion, Pitt revised his former judgement, and informed Malmesbury that, while declining the offers of the Grenvilles to help to overthrow Addington, he would not refuse to take office if for any reason Ministers resigned. On that day (19th February) Melville wrote to him from Melville Castle that the outlook was full of horror, and everything depended on the formation of a steady and permanent Government with which foreign nations could treat. For this reason he (Melville) urged that the King should be relieved of his executive duties, which it was sheer cruelty to exact from him.[2] Pitt's answer to this daring proposal is not known; but later, on 29th March, in answer to further overtures from Melville, he stated that the King's illness was less serious than was reported by the Earl of Moira, the *confidante* of the Prince of Wales; and that while it lasted he doubted the propriety of taking any steps to overturn the Ministry.[1] To this scrupulousness Melville was a stranger, and on 4th April again urged him to form a compact opposition for the overthrow of Addington, and promised him the votes of at least twenty-six Scottish members (out of forty-five) for any such effort.[2]

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[1] "Creevey Papers," i, 25-7.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

Meanwhile the King recovered but slowly. The nervous, excited, irritable symptoms showed little abatement; and in the third week in March he fell into a fit of anger of such violence that he had to be strapped to his bed. Even more threatening was the military situation. Yorke, early in March, proposed a Volunteer Consolidation Bill, which met with general derision. As the state of the Navy was also unsatisfactory, Pitt freely criticized Ministers, especially St. Vincent; and, on one occasion, when Addington showed boyish petulance, he met with a serene and courteous answer. Tierney, Treasurer of the Navy, attacked Pitt coarsely; Sheridan, with his usual wit and brilliance; but neither coarseness nor eloquence could rehabilitate that Ministry. The urgency of the crisis appears in the following letter written by Pitt at Walmer Castle to some person unknown:

April 11, 1804.

. . . The experience of the last summer and the discussions of this session confirm me in the opinion that while the Government remains in its present shape and under its present leader, nothing efficient can be expected either to originate with them or to be fairly adopted and effectually executed. With this persuasion, and thinking that a system of more energy and decision is indispensable with a view to the immediate crisis and the many difficulties he may have to encounter in the course of the present contest, I mean to take an early opportunity of avowing and acting on these sentiments more explicitly and decidedly than I have hitherto done; and I shall endeavour to give effect to my opinion by the support of all the friends whom I can collect. My object will be to press to the utmost those points which I think essential to the public defence, and at the same time in doing so to make it, if I can, impossible for the present Government to maintain itself. In this object I have every reason to believe that I shall have the fullest concurrence of all those with whom I have the most differed on former occasions and with whom possibly I may as little agree in future. With their number added to my own more immediate friends, and to the few who have acted with L^{d} Grenville and Windham, I am persuaded that our division on any favourable question will probably be such as would be sufficient to shake a much stronger Government than the present. . . .[1]

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[1] Stanhope, iv, 139-44.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

On the same day he promised Melville to return to town in the middle of April, and to make the "principal push" against Addington on 23rd April, on the subject of Yorke's Bill for suspending the completion of the Army Reserve. If they failed, he would return to Walmer for another kind of contest. The joint assault by Fox and Pitt against the Ministry on 23rd April produced a great sensation, the speech of Pitt being remarkable for its suppressed sarcasm and thinly veiled charges of inefficiency. As a call to arms, it stands without a rival. Ministers were utterly beaten in argument, and escaped defeat only by thirty-seven votes. Addington became alarmed, and advised the King, who was now convalescent, to instruct the Lord Chancellor, Eldon, to confer with Pitt, a fact which refutes the charges of Brougham and Dean Pellew against Eldon.

Finally the King allowed Pitt to make proposals concerning a new Ministry. Pitt did so fully and courteously in a paper which George III forthwith described to Eldon as containing "many empty words and little information." To Pitt himself the King, on 5th May, expressed his deep regret that he had taken such a dislike to Mr. Addington, after the praiseworthy services of the latter to our glorious Constitution in Church and State. He could never forget the wound which Pitt proposed to deal it, and "the indelicacy (not to call it worse) of wanting His Majesty to forego his solemn Coronation Oath." He therefore required Pitt to give a solemn pledge not to propose the least alteration in the Test Act. As to a proposal to admit Fox to the Cabinet, the King expressed "his astonishment that Mr. Pitt should one moment harbour the thought of bringing such a man before his Royal notice." References to the "wild ideas" of Burke, and to Grenville being guided by obstinacy, "his usual director," filled up the interstices of this strange composition.[2] Evidently the enfeebled brain of George could form no notion of the national danger. While Pitt thought only of the safety of England, the King's thoughts continued to gyrate angrily around the Test Act, the Coronation Oath, and the iniquities of Fox.

It was therefore with grave apprehension that on 7th May

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[1] From Mr. A. M. Broadley's MSS.

[2] Stanhope, iv, App. viii-ix.

Pitt went to Buckingham House for attendance upon the King, the first for nearly three and a quarter years. He expected an outburst of rage when he mentioned the chief subject at issue, namely the inclusion of Fox and the Grenvilles in the future Administration. The King, however, kept surprising control over his feelings, behaved graciously to Pitt, tactfully waived aside smaller questions that he disliked, even consented to admit the Grenvilles, but for ever barred the way to the return of Fox. The utmost that he would hear was the employment of Fox as an ambassador. Once again, then, the royal convalescent outwitted Pitt. "Never," said Pitt to Eldon, "in any conversation I have had with him in my life has he so baffled me." Fox being excluded by the King, there was scant hope of bringing in his new allies, the Grenvilles and Windham. Pitt broached the matter to Lord Grenville on 7th May, and received on the morrow a friendly but firm refusal. The following sentences are noteworthy: "We rest our determination solely on our strong sense of the impropriety of our becoming parties to a system of Government which is to be formed at such a moment as the present on a principle of exclusion. . . . We see no hope of any effectual remedy for those mischiefs but by uniting in the public service as large a proportion as possible of the weight, talents, and character to be found in public men of all descriptions and without any exception."

The refusal of Grenville to join Pitt has often been ascribed to jealousy of Pitt, and the latter is reported to have said that he would teach that proud man that he could do without him. The sentiment is alien to the tolerant nature of Pitt,[1] who must have respected his cousin's decision, based as it was on a determination to break down the bigoted resolve of the King. But Grenville's conduct punished Pitt far more severely than the King. For while George in his feeble, irritable condition thought only about the Test Act and Fox, Pitt was intent on forming a truly national Administration, including Fox, Fitzwilliam, and Melville as Secretaries of State, with Spencer at the Admiralty, Grenville as Lord President, and Windham as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.[2]

The actual result was far inferior. Fox, Fitzwilliam, Spencer, Grenville, and Windham being ruled out by the King's action and Grenville's resolve, the Cabinet was formed as follows: Pitt, First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer; Harrowby, Foreign Secretary; Hawkesbury, Home Secretary; Camden, Secretary at War and for the Colonies; Portland, Lord President; Eldon, Lord Chancellor; Westmorland, Privy Seal; Melville, Admiralty; Chatham, Master of Ordnance; Mulgrave, Duchy of Lancaster; Castlereagh, President of the India Board; the Duke of Montrose, President of the Board of Trade. Of these twelve Ministers, six had been with Addington, namely, Hawkesbury (though at the Foreign Office, which he unwillingly vacated), Portland, Eldon, Westmorland, Chatham, and Castlereagh.[1] Pitt dispensed with the services of Addington, St. Vincent, and Pelham. Of non-Cabinet appointments, the chief were those of the Earl of Hardwicke as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; Sir Evan Nepean, Irish Secretary; William Dundas, War Office; Canning, Treasury of the Navy, in place of Tierney, who declined to serve with Pitt; Lord Charles Somerset and George Rose, Joint Paymasters of the Forces; and Perceval, Attorney-General. Canning and Rose were dissatisfied with their appointments, the latter writing to Bishop Tomline in deep chagrin at Pitt's neglect of his faithful services.

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[1] G. Rose, "Diaries," i, 4.

[2] Stanhope, iv, 177.

The new Cabinet, besides being too large, was half Addingtonian and half Pittite, a source of weakness which soon led to further changes. It was also weighted with inefficient members—Chatham, Hawkesbury, and Portland. The King disliked Hawkesbury, and said he had no head for business, no method, and no punctuality. Harrowby, though a man of brilliant parts in private life, and an excellent speaker, was oppressed by a delicate frame, precarious health, and a peevish temper. During no small part of his tenure of office he had to take the waters at Bath, and was therefore a poor substitute for the experienced and hard-working Grenville. Pitt, for some unexplained reason, disliked placing Melville at the Admiralty, a strangely prophetic instinct. Camden and Mulgrave were also misfits. Hawkesbury did better work at the Home Office than the Foreign Office; but on the whole, the new arrangement aroused widespread grumbling and distrust. The result of it all was the dissolution of the great national party formed in the year 1794 and the formation of three groups, following Pitt, Addington, and Grenville, the Addingtonians showing much bitterness at the treatment of their chief, while the Grenvilles and Windham inveighed against the new Ministry, as formed on the principle of excluding Fox.[1] The charge was unfair; for at that crisis Pitt could not stand by and see the national resources frittered away by Addington. The King's Government had to be carried on; and, like Wellington a generation later, Pitt consented to do so in the only way which was practicable.

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[1] Pitt thoroughly approved of Castlereagh taking the India Board under Addington in July 1802; in October he entered the Cabinet ("Private Papers of Wilberforce," 131).

The limitations of his power were soon obvious. The two unfriendly groups eagerly criticized him at all times and accorded grudging and doubtful support even on measures which they approved. This was especially the case with regard to the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Thanks to the untiring exertions of Wilberforce, Clarkson, and others, that movement had made considerable progress during the interval of peace. The outbreak of war in May 1803 darkened the outlook; for once again the cry was raised that England must not cut off a trade which was essential to the welfare of the West Indies, highly lucrative to British shipowners, and a necessary adjunct to the mercantile marine. Nevertheless, the accession of Pitt to power and the goodwill of the majority of the Irish members inspired Wilberforce with hope. True, Addington always strenuously opposed him; and among the younger members of the Cabinet Castlereagh had declared his hostility; but at first all went well. At the close of May 1804 Pitt and Fox united in expressing approval of Wilberforce's proposals. Addington, in remarks which lasted exactly forty seconds, scouted the measure, but carried with him only 49 members as against 124. The majorities were nearly as great at the second and third readings.

In the Lords the omens were inauspicious. Some bishops were away in their dioceses: the supporters of the West India and shipping interests were at hand, using their utmost endeavours to delay, if not to defeat, the measure. Pitt despaired of thwarting these dilatory tactics, backed by wealth and influence from all quarters. Wilberforce wrote indignantly to Lord Muncaster: "It was truly humiliating to see four of the Royal Family come down to vote against the poor, helpless, friendless slaves." A wild speech by Stanhope told against the cause which he meant to further, and the motion was adjourned to avoid defeat.

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[1] Wraxall (iii, 281) with his usual bias says that Pitt "affected" to desire the inclusion of Fox.

Pitt's subsequent conduct in 1805 disappointed Wilberforce. Certainly it was half-hearted and procrastinating. But, seeing that he had to rely more on Addington and finally to bring him into the Cabinet, his difficulties were great. The Irish members also showed signs of defection; and it was certain that the Bill would fail in the Lords. Accordingly, Pitt begged Wilberforce to wait for a more propitious time. A sense of religious duty impelled him to persevere, with the inevitable result, a crushing defeat (19th February 1805).[1] On a smaller question, connected with the prohibition of the supply of slaves to Guiana, then recently conquered from the Dutch, he finally brought Pitt to acquiesce. But here again the conduct of the Minister was tardy. Wilberforce urged Pitt to abolish the Guiana Slave Trade by an Order in Council, and early in May wrote: "One very powerful and important reason for your abolishing the Guiana Slave Trade by an act of Government, not by, or in consequence of a vote of Parliament, is that it would tend to confirm the disposition so strongly manifested by the Dutch to abolish the Slave Trade, and give them the sort of compensation they demand." The British Order in Council did not appear until 13th September 1805.[2]

Nevertheless, their friendship remained firm to the end. "Had much talk with him [Pitt] on political topics, finding him very open and kind." Such is Wilberforce's account of his last interviews with Pitt; and he certainly could not have remained on friendly terms with one who was deliberately untrue to the cause. He knew better than recent critics the difficulties resulting from the compromise with Addington and from the ceaseless friction with the followers of Fox and Grenville.

The case of the Slave Trade serves to illustrate the peculiar difficulties of Pitt's position, which were to appear on even more important questions. The King, Addington, Grenville, and Pitt had all contributed to the tangle. Limiting our survey to the conduct of Addington and Pitt, we must pronounce both of them culpable. Addington should have seen that Pitt's promise of support, given at the time of the King's lunacy in February—March 1801, was not morally binding three years later when the existence of the nation was at stake in the Napoleonic War. At such a time an enlightened patriot does not stand upon punctilio, but gladly takes a second place if he can thereby place in authority an abler man. Addington alone could release Pitt from the debt of honour incurred in February 1801, and faithfully discharged for three weary years, at the cost of the alienation of friends and the derision of opponents. He never spoke or wrote that word of release, but held Pitt to the bargain with an insistence which would be contemptible were it not in large measure the outcome of a narrow complacent nature blind to its own shortcomings.

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," iii, 168, 182, 184, 211, 212.

[2] *Ibid.*, iii, 230-4; Pitt MSS., 189.

Pitt, also, behaved weakly. The original promise, to support an untried man, was a piece of astounding trustfulness; and when the weakness of Addington's Administration involved the nation in war and brought it to the brink of disaster, he should openly have claimed release from a pledge too hastily given, leaving the world to judge between them. As it was, for nearly a year he wavered to and fro between the claims of national duty and private honour, thereby exasperating his friends and finally driving the Grenvilles, Windham, and Spencer to a union with Fox which in its turn blighted the hope of forming a national Administration. Finally, he made only one effort to induce the King to accept Fox. True, the situation was a delicate one; for pressure brought to bear on George on that topic would have brought back the mental malady. But the Grenvilles, viewing the situation with pedantic narrowness, considered the attempt so half-hearted as to warrant their opposition to the new Cabinet. On the whole, then, Pitt's punctiliousness must be pronounced a secondary but vital cause of the lamentable *dénouement*, which left him exposed at forty-five years of age, enfeebled by worry and gout, to a contest with Napoleon at the climax of his powers.

CHAPTER XXIII

PITT AND NAPOLEON

I made a mistake about England, in trying to conquer it. The English are a brave nation. I have always said that there are only two nations, the English and the French; and I made the French.—NAPOLEON TO MACNAMARA (1814), *Lord Broughton's Recollections*, i, 180.

THE two protagonists now stood face to face—Napoleon, Emperor of the French, President of the Italian Republic, Mediator of the Swiss Republic, controller of Holland, absolute ruler of a great military Empire; Pitt, the Prime Minister of an obstinate and at times half-crazy King, dependent on a weak Cabinet, a disordered Exchequer, a Navy weakened by ill-timed economies, and land forces whose martial ardour ill made up for lack of organization, equipment, and training. Before the outbreak of war in May 1803, Napoleon had summed up the situation in the words—"Forty-five millions of people must prevail over sixteen millions." And now after a year of hostilities his position was far stronger. In Hanover the French troops were profitably installed on the Elector's domains. Soult's corps occupied the Neapolitan realm, thus threatening Malta, the Ionian Isles, the Morea, and Egypt. The recent restitution of several colonial conquests by England not only damaged her trade, but enabled her enemy to stir up trouble in India. There, thanks to Wellesley's dramatic victory at Assaye, the Union Jack waved in triumph; but at other points Napoleon might hope to gain the long contested race for Empire.

So convinced was Pitt of the need of fighting out the quarrel thrust upon us by Napoleon's aggressions, that he waved aside an offer of Livingston, American envoy at Paris, to effect a reconciliation. During a brief visit to London, Livingston sent proposals to this effect through Whitworth, who declined to meet a man hitherto remarkable for a strong anti-British bias; and

Pitt approved this repulse.[1] Nevertheless, on 5th June Livingston, accompanied by Fox and Grey, called on Pitt at Downing Street; but his proposals proved to be merely the outcome of informal conversations with Joseph Bonaparte, who was known to be far more peacefully inclined than his brother. Joseph's notions were that Malta should perhaps be garrisoned by Russians, and must in any case be relinquished by England; that France should withdraw her troops from the Dutch and Swiss Republics, the status of which was not defined.[2] Pitt set little store by these shadowy proposals, doubtless seeing in them a way of discovering whether England was concerting a league against France.

Already, in spite of many obstacles, he was taking the first steps in that direction. An initial difficulty lay in the mental aberrations of the King, whose conduct still caused intense anxiety or annoyance.[3] Scarcely a day passed without a lapse into incoherence or violence. Moreover, his conversation often showed a lack of discrimination, being the same to the Queen, the physicians, or the servants. He made the most capricious changes, turning off the Queen's favourite coachman, and making grooms footmen, and footmen grooms, to the distraction of the household. On assuming office, Pitt consulted the royal physicians and received a reply, dated Queen's Palace, 16th May 1804, stating that the King was equal to the discharge of important business, but must avoid long conferences or any deviation from his usual habits, quiet being essential. Thereupon Pitt and Lord Eldon wrote to the King urging this prudent course. They frequently visited Buckingham House, where five physicians were in almost constant attendance, a state of things viewed with alarm by patriots and with eager hope by the Foxites and their hangers on.[4]

Unfortunately George could not compose himself to rest. Such is the tenor of hasty notes sent to Pitt by Villiers, now high in favour at Kew and Windsor. They describe the King's fussy intervention in household affairs, his orders for sudden and expensive changes in the palaces, his substitution of German for English servants, his frequent visits to the stables unaccompanied by the equerry, his irritability on the most trifling occasions, and, alternating with this undignified bustle, fits of somnolence which at times overtook him even on horseback. Then, too, there were quarrels with the Queen, whose conduct, said Villiers, was such as to aggravate these troubles and check the course of recovery. Indeed, the King's violent headaches seemed to Dr. Milman to presage an attack of apoplexy. At all times he showed a marked preference for the company of servants and workmen, declaring the higher officials to be "Court nuisances." Villiers therefore begged Pitt to request an interview with the King, now at Kew, for he took no notice of letters. On Midsummer day Villiers suggested means for assuring the veto of the physicians on the projected visit to Weymouth, in view of the extravagance and inconvenience of the plans to which it gave rise.

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[1] Pitt MSS., 102. Pitt to Whitworth, 28th May 1804; G. Rose, "Diaries," ii, 136. See, too, Rose, "Despatches relating to the . . . Third Coalition," 27.

[2] Stanhope, iv, 199-201.

[3] Czartoryski, "Memoirs," ii, 35.

[4] "Creevey Papers," i, 28.

Among them was the collection of a large military force in Dorset, George being convinced that the French would land there rather than in Kent or Essex. Fortunately, the Duke of York dissuaded him from a step so eminently favourable to Napoleon; for about this time the King wrote to the Duke: "As I am no friend to obstinacy, I will agree to lessen the demand from other districts" (*i.e.*, for an "Army of Reserve" in Dorset). The visit to Weymouth was also postponed; and Camden, Secretary at War, countermanded the construction of huge barracks at that town, which the King had ordered without consulting the Cabinet or the Duke of York. On 1st August Villiers reported the refusal of the King to see the Prince of Wales, with whom no complete reconciliation was possible. George wished Villiers to come and reside near Windsor and manage all his private affairs, and would take no refusal. But how, asked Villiers, was he to do this on £330 a year? He therefore requested the advice and help of Pitt.[1]

At Weymouth, late in the summer, the quarrels between the King and Queen again became acute, as appears from confidential letters which Lord Hawkesbury wrote to Pitt. The latter sided with the Queen and Princes on some points; and indeed through these months the conduct of George seems to have been so exasperating that the Princesses almost sank under the ceaseless strain, for Queen Charlotte, too, was "ill and cross." In vain did Pitt seek to effect a reconciliation between the King and the Prince of Wales. The only result of his efforts was a formal and fruitless interview. Last but not least of Pitt's Court worries was the conduct of the Princess of Wales. Her wayward and extravagant habits increased the aversion of the Prince, and produced scandals so serious that Pitt urgently but ineffectually remonstrated with her at her residence in Blackheath. Such were the diversions of a Minister on whom almost singly rested the burden of defending his country at this crisis.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

The eccentricities of the King seriously hampered British diplomacy. For how could Russia and Austria bind themselves to an Administration which might at any time be succeeded by one which was under the domination of the Prince of Wales, Fox, and Sheridan? True, offers of a defensive alliance were mooted at St. Petersburg to our ambassador, Admiral Warren. But it was obvious even to that misplaced sailor, whom Pitt soon recalled, that Russia merely aimed at securing English subsidies and help for her garrison at Corfu, now threatened by Soult. The timid conduct of Francis II, who, as if in imitation of Napoleon, assumed the title of Hereditary Emperor of the Austrian Empire, further prescribed caution; and only by slow degrees did the Czar Alexander feel his way towards an understanding with England. His jealousy respecting Malta, and the uncertainties at London and Windsor, held these natural allies apart for many months. Pitt did not hurry matters, doubtless from a conviction that the conduct of Napoleon must before long bring both Russia and Austria into the field. Meanwhile, he withheld subsidies which would have helped them to arm for an almost inevitable struggle.[1] We need not therefore trace the course of these coy advances until they led to definite overtures. Here as always Pitt showed a dignified reserve and a cautious regard for British finances, which refute the stories officially circulated at Paris as to his lavishly bribing the Continental States to attack France. As usually happens, the prosaic truth long remained hidden in British despatches, while the piquant slander gained all but universal acceptance.

Pitt's first thought was to enhance the value of England's friendship by strengthening her navy and enabling her to take the offensive if an occasion offered. The French royalist refugee,

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[1] Rose, "Despatches relating to the . . . Third Coalition" (Royal Hist. Soc., 1904), 14-19; also Rose, "Napoleonic Studies," 364-6, for the tentative Russian overture of November 1803.

General Dumouriez, in a long Memoir which he drew up for the Cabinet, pointed out that nothing was more perilous than a perpetual defensive, as it allowed the enemy quietly to perfect his plans for attack at any point over the whole field.[1] Pitt was well aware of this danger. In fact, his policy of military pin-pricks, while apparently wasteful and inconclusive, had prevented that concentration of the enemy's force which alone could ensure the capture of London. Once more, then, he aimed at strengthening the regular army, reducing the Militia to its usual quota, and raising a large force of Volunteers. On 5th June 1804 he brought forward his proposal for repairing the defects of Yorke's Army of Reserve Act. They arose from the following provisions. A man, when drawn to serve in that force, must either come forward, find a substitute, or pay a fine of £20 for each year of default. A penalty also fell on every parish failing to supply its quota. The consequence was that parishes and individuals offered high bounties in order to escape the fine—sometimes as much as £40 or £60 per man.[2] These bounties naturally drew the best recruits to the Army of Reserve, to the detriment both of the army and navy. Another source of loss to the line regiments was the addition to the strength of the Militia, the net result being that 9,000 more recruits were required annually for the regular forces. These therefore suffered from the competition of the second and third lines of defence; and in this competition (then unusually severe) has always lain the crux of the British military problem.

Pitt sought to solve the problem by reducing the Militia (now 74,000 strong) to the old standard of 52,000 men, transferring the surplus to the Army of Reserve. He also suggested various inducements to men in the latter force to enter the line regiments. Further, he proposed to lessen the penalties levied on defaulters. While maintaining the principle of compulsory service, at least for a considerable part of the population, he lessened the inducements which told in favour of the Army of Reserve and against the Line. Further, in place of the irritating plan of recruiting by the compulsion of the ballot, Pitt made the parish authorities responsible for the supply of their quota. If, even so, the parishes could not find the men, the commander of the district was empowered to raise them by the ordinary means of recruiting. He further proposed to associate in each district the battalions of the Army of Reserve with those of the Line, in the well-grounded hope of increasing *esprit de corps* and stimulating the flow of men into the first line of defence.

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[1] Rose and Broadley, "Dumouriez and the Defence of England against Napoleon," 260.

[2] Fortescue, v, 204-13. Half of the fine went to the overseers of the parish, who were bound under penalties to provide a parochial substitute.

The chief critic of these proposals was Sheridan who, on 18th June brilliantly declaimed against the formation of a great Regular Army, as alien to the spirit of our people, and by all the arts of rhetorical necromancy sought to raise the spectre of a Standing Army. When others bemoaned the threatened increase of taxation and Windham and Craufurd ("Craufurd of the Light Division") criticized the measure severely, the Opposition cherished the hope of defeating the Ministry. The debate dragged on till 4 a.m. when 265 members supported Pitt against 223 Noes. The Bill became law on 29th June. Undoubtedly it failed to answer his hopes. Recruits did not come in, probably because most parishes were thenceforth content to pay the smaller fines now imposed. Grenville even ventured to assert that the Regular Army was smaller at the beginning of 1805 than a year earlier. Certainly the numbers were deficient; and Pitt accordingly on 31st March 1805 brought in a Bill to attract men from the Supplementary Militia into the Regular Army by a bounty of ten guineas per man. This brought forward 11,000 men, but at the expense of the Militia.[1] Thus Pitt did not solve the military problem. Who indeed has solved it?

Most fortunately for England, the Emperor had made serious miscalculations respecting the flotilla now preparing at the ports between Ostend and Etaples. First he armed his gun-boats heavily so that they might fight their way across against a fleet. On finding this to be impossible, he had to face the delay and expense of reconstruction. Next the harbours at and near Boulogne proved to be too shallow and too small for the enlarged flotilla. The strengthening of the French fleet was also a work of time. England therefore gained a year's respite. Indeed not a few experienced naval officers scouted an invasion by the flotilla as impossible. General Moore also believed that Napoleon would never be so mad as to make the attempt, which must end in our glory and his disgrace. Only by continuing to threaten us could he do harm.[1] Another sceptic was Lord Melville, First Lord of the Admiralty, who, in a letter of 14th October, urged Pitt during his stay at Weymouth to represent to the King the importance of attacking the flotilla at Boulogne, if only in order to show the impracticability of Napoleon's scheme. Experienced officers, said Melville, reported that the flotilla must embark the troops in the outer road; yet the work of getting that vast concourse of boats out of the inner harbour could not be accomplished in less than four, five, or perhaps even six tides. We must therefore attack them during this tedious operation. "Our officers and seamen," he continues, "have a perfect confidence that they can attack them under their own batteries, and put them into immediate confusion. . . . Their confidence is founded on the experiment they have already made of entering in the night the Bay of Boulogne and sustaining for many hours the whole fire of the enemy's batteries without a single man being hurt." Moreover, the British fire-ships, being like ordinary ships, will take the enemy by surprise and cause irremediable confusion.[2] Apparently the King and Pitt thought an attack not only too risky, in view of the failures at Boulogne in 1801 and on 3rd October 1804, but also needless, if the flotilla were no more formidable than Melville pronounced. While inspecting the "Royal Sovereign" at Portsmouth on 6th October the King wrote to Pitt enjoining great caution, as a failure would be very discreditable.[3]

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[1] Fortescue, v, 239, 240.

I do not propose to discuss here the much debated question whether Napoleon intended to invade England, or to wear us out by threats of invasion.[4] Suffice it to say that no responsible Minister could ignore those formidable preparations. Pitt therefore strove might and main to raise martial enthusiasm by attending drills and reviews of Volunteers. A cynical phrase in Grenville's letter of 25th August 1804 dwells on the ridiculous figure which he cut, riding from Downing Street to Wimbledon Common and thence to Cox Heath in Kent "to inspect military carriages, impregnable batteries, and Lord Chatham's reviews. Can he possibly be serious in expecting Bonaparte now?" The sneer is a sign of the strained relations between the cousins. Assuredly, if Bonaparte had come, Grenville and his Foxite allies would have impeached a Minister who left his country defenceless. Pitt showed a good example to country gentlemen by drilling his corps of Volunteers at Walmer, so that it became a model of efficiency. There was the greatest need at that point, for the coast between Ramsgate and Dungeness presented exceptional facilities for a landing except under the guns of Sandown, Deal, Walmer, and Dover. Pitt's attention was specially directed to the open shelving beach between Folkestone and Dungeness.

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[1] "Creevey Papers," i, 29.

[2] Pitt MSS., 157.

[3] Pretyman MSS. See "Ann. Reg." (1805) for the failure at Boulogne on 3rd October 1804.

[4] See Desbrière, "Projets . . . de Débarquement, etc.," vol. v; Rose, "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters," pp. 114-146.

In truth, the district of Romney Marsh, which is not normally marshy, offered the maximum of attractions to an invader, who, after beaching his boats and entrenching himself behind a fosse, would find few, if any, physical obstacles to his advance into the level tract between Ashford and Tonbridge. As this route was undefended, Pitt and Camden, by the month of October 1804, decided on the construction of the Hythe Military Canal. On 24th October Pitt attended a meeting of the "surveyors, lords, bailiffs and jurats" of Romney Marsh held at Dymchurch, Generals Sir David Dundas and Moore, and Colonel Brown being also present. It was agreed that the proposed canal from Sandgate to Rye would be beneficial to Romney Marsh, and landlords were urged forthwith to put their property at the disposal of Government, trusting to receive compensation assessed by a duly qualified local jury. On Pitt's recommendation the matter was passed at once, and he returned to Walmer Castle.[1] By the end of 1804 the work was well in hand, the expense of cutting the fosse of ten feet deep being estimated at £150,000. Batteries and martello towers were designed for its protection especially around Hythe and Dymchurch. At the latter place were sluices for flooding the marsh. Criticisms have fallen freely upon Pitt's canal, the report gaining currency that it was intended for the conveyance of military stores. Its true purpose was to isolate the most vulnerable part of the coast and to form a barrier which would at least delay an invader until reinforcements arrived. In its original condition it was an excellent first line of defence of South Kent; and, unless the French flotilla brought over pontoons, it formed a barrier not easily penetrable, which fully justified its comparatively small cost.

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[1] "Kentish Gazette," 26th October 1804. Apparently Moore agreed to the scheme, despite his opinion quoted above. For information on this topic I am indebted to Lieutenant-Colonel Fynmore of Sandgate. In the manœuvres of 1910 regiments were told off to extemporize means of crossing the canal in the quickest and most effective way.

The same remarks apply to the martello towers. The responsibility for them rests mainly with Colonel Twiss and Captain Ford, who in the summer of 1803 recommended their construction at exposed points of the shore, at a cost of about £3,000 apiece. The experience of our troops in Corsica showed that such towers, even when held by small garrisons, could hold at bay a greatly superior force.[1] The towers were begun soon afterwards; but those in Pevensey Bay were not undertaken till 1805-6. The first points to be defended were those nearest to France.

In the winter of 1804-5 there was need to strengthen the coast defences; for the declaration of war by Spain placed the whole of the coast line from the Texel to Toulon at Napoleon's disposal for shipbuilding. There seemed therefore every prospect of our being finally overwhelmed at sea, a consummation which the French Emperor might have ensured had he refrained from irritating the monarchs of Russia and Austria. Fortunately for England, his nature was too restless and domineering to admit of the necessary concentration of effort on the naval problem; and that besetting sin, megalomania, marred prospects which then seemed easily realizable. Playing with coolness and patience, he had the game in his hands in 1804, when as yet there was little prospect of an Anglo-Russian alliance.

An offensive alliance of Spain with France was the natural result of the treaty of 1796 between the two Powers. In vain did the luxurious Charles IV and his pampered minion, Godoy, Prince of the Peace, seek to evade their obligations. Under threat of a French invasion they gave way and agreed to pay 72,000,000 francs a year into the French exchequer, and to force the hand of Portugal. That little Power purchased immunity for a time by paying an annual subsidy of 12,000,000 francs to France. Spain also repaired French warships which took refuge at Ferrol in July 1804, and allowed reinforcements to their crews to travel thither overland. When Pitt and Harrowby remonstrated on this conduct, Spain armed as if for war; and in answer to inquiries from London, Godoy alleged certain disputes with the United States as the cause of his alarm. The arrival in London of Frere, our ambassador at Madrid, on 17th September 1804 revealed the unreality of this excuse; for he reported that Spain had previously decided to yield on that question. As the Spanish fleet was evidently preparing to co-operate with that of Napoleon, Pitt resolved to deal the blow which Chatham was not allowed to deliver in 1761. The weak point of Spain was her treasure fleet; there was an inner fitness in wrenching from her the gold which was soon to go into Napoleon's coffers.

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[1] "W. O.," 76; "Diary of Sir J. Moore," ii, 71-4.

On Tuesday, 18th September, the Cabinet assembled, Eldon, Camden, Hawkesbury, Melville, Mulgrave, and Pitt being present. In view of the news brought by Frere, and other tidings from Rear-Admiral Cochrane off Ferrol, Ministers decided to order Cochrane closely to blockade that port, preventing both French and Spanish ships from sailing out. Admiral Cornwallis, then blockading Brest, was to reinforce Cochrane, thereby assuring the capture of the Spanish treasure ships bound from South America to Cadiz.[1] Pitt at once reported this decision to Harrowby, then in attendance on the King at Weymouth, and urged a speedy ratification of it.[2] Hence without delay the order went forth which enlarged the area of strife. The four frigates despatched for the seizure of the treasure-ships were not so superior in force to the convoying corvettes as to avert a conflict. One of the Spanish ships blew up: the others surrendered (5th October 1804). Resenting this outrage, Spain declared war on 12th December.[3] Pitt did not consider the capture of the treasure-ships as necessarily involving war, but rather as a sharp warning, called for by the hostile conduct of Spain; for on 23rd September he wrote to Harrowby stating that they must wait for the Spanish answer to our ultimatum, and in the meantime Spanish merchantmen might leave British ports unmolested.[4]

The seizure of the Spanish treasure-ships caused resentment at St. Petersburg until the causes of Britain's action were more fully known. But the event did not long delay a good understanding. The prospect of Sicily falling a prey to the French army of occupation in South Italy alarmed both the Czar Alexander and Pitt. The former was bound by a Convention signed in 1798 to befriend the Neapolitan Court; and it was also to his interest to prevent France dominating the Mediterranean and expelling the Russians from Corfu. He therefore demanded from Napoleon the evacuation of Italy and North Germany, a suitable compensation for the King of Sardinia for the loss of his mainland possessions, and the recognition of the complete neutrality of the Germanic Empire. Far from complying with these demands, Napoleon kept his troops in South Italy and Hanover, and early in November seized Sir Horace Rumbold, British ambassador at Hamburg. At once Pitt and Harrowby made effective use of this incident to prove the impossibility of peace with Napoleon. The Russian and Prussian Courts sent sharp remonstrances to Paris; and, to humour Frederick William, Napoleon ordered the release of the envoy, though in the most grudging way possible. This violation of international law served to counterbalance our irregular action against Spain.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

[2] Harrowby MSS.

[3] Mahan, ii, ch. xv, *ad fin.*; "Ann. Reg." (1804), 555; "Mems. of R. P. Ward," i, ch. vii. For the subsequent plan of Ministers to attack Ferrol, from which Moore dissuaded them, see "Diary of Sir J. Moore," ii, ch. xxi.

[4] Harrowby MSS.

In short, Napoleon's evident resolve everywhere to carry matters with a high hand convinced the Czar that war was inevitable; and he prepared to espouse the cause of Britain, not so much from sympathy with her as from detestation of her restless adversary.[1] On 20th November Pitt wrote from Downing Street to Harrowby, who was then taking the waters at Bath, expressing joy that the views of Russia coincided entirely with ours, especially as to the reduction of the French Power within its ancient limits. He added these noteworthy words: "The restoration of the [French] monarchy may become in the course of events an object to be distinctly aimed at, but it certainly cannot be made a substantive object in the first instance; and it is very satisfactory to see that in this important point there is no apparent difference in our sentiments."[2] The hope of ending Prussia's subservience to Napoleon, and of inspiring Francis of Austria with a manly resolve, proved futile. Frederick William and Haugwitz hoped to creep into Hanover, under the French

[1] Rose, "Third Coalition," 32, 53, 61, 65, 67, 71, 75.

[2] Harrowby MSS.

Emperor's cloak, and Austria had not yet suffered enough humiliation to lead her to fling down the gauntlet. True, she signed a compact with Russia on 6th November 1804; but it was timidly defensive in tone. Alexander therefore held back in the hope that events would compel her to take sides against Napoleon.

Far less calculating was Gustavus IV of Sweden. With the chivalrous zeal of his race he stood forth the first among the European monarchs as the declared ally of England. After the execution of the Duc d'Enghien by the French Emperor, he informed "Monsieur" Napoleon Bonaparte of the rupture of all relations between them; and now, on 3rd December 1804, an Anglo-Swedish Convention was signed, placing at our disposal the Isle of Rügen and the fortress of Stralsund in Swedish Pomerania, in return for a subsidy of £80,000. This sum served but to whet his appetite for subsidies, his demands almost equalling in extravagance his Quixotic summons to a royalist crusade.

Pitt therefore based his hopes on the statesmanlike policy of the Czar, who in that month despatched to London one of his confidants, a clever but viewy young man, of frank and engaging manners, Count Novossiltzoff. Ostensibly the mission was for scientific purposes; but French agents discovered that he took with him a plan of a Coalition against Napoleon.[1] This seems to have led the Emperor to take a step similar to that of Christmastide 1799. On 2nd January 1805 he wrote a letter direct to George III, proposing terms of peace. The King at once expressed to Pitt his astonishment that "the French usurper" had addressed him in this objectionable manner, and highly approved the draft of an answer which Pitt had thoughtfully forwarded to Windsor. In it Pitt declared that His Majesty could not enter upon the proposed overtures for peace until he had communicated them to the Powers with which he had confidential ties, especially to the Emperor of Russia. At the King's command, he sent a copy of this answer to St. Petersburg. At London, then, as also at Paris, Napoleon's offer was deemed a diplomatic device for getting news, though it also enabled him to represent himself as the friend of peace and Pitt as its worst enemy.

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[1] Lefebvre, "Cabinets de l'Europe," ii, 33.

While the French Emperor played his game with the advantages conferred by a daring initiative, superior force, and unquestioned authority at home, Pitt had to employ all possible means to conciliate allies abroad and half-hearted friends at Westminster. His position was far from secure. True, the King had now recovered almost his usual health; but in Parliament the Ministry with difficulty repelled the bitter attacks of Fox, Sheridan, Grenville, and Windham. The speech of Grenville on the seizure of the Spanish treasure ships was of singular bitterness. Though aware of the provocations of the Spanish Court, he chose to represent that affair as a cowardly, and almost piratical attack on an unprepared Power. Pitt had expected some such misrepresentations. He knew that the Opposition would strain every nerve to overthrow him; and in the Christmas Vacation he made timely overtures through Hawkesbury for the support of Addington. The two old friends met on 23rd December 1804, at Hawkesbury's residence, Coombe Wood, near Richmond Park. The host contrived to be absent when Pitt entered the room, and he advanced with the cordial greeting: "I rejoice to take you by the hand again."

Converse of three hours ensued between them alone. Addington demurred to Pitt's request that he should retire to the Upper House. Finally, however, he agreed to do so, accepting the title of Viscount Sidmouth, taking also the Presidency of the Council, which the Duke of Portland, for reasons of health, wished to relinquish, though he finally agreed to remain in the Cabinet without office. Lord Hobart, now Earl of Buckinghamshire, also entered the Cabinet as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in place of Lord Mulgrave, who now succeeded Lord Harrowby at the Foreign Office. Pitt further promised to promote some of Addington's supporters, including his brother-in-law, Bragge Bathurst.

These changes were resented by several of Pitt's supporters, especially by Rose. We have already noticed his contempt for Addington's financial shifts; and he now, on 8th January 1805, wrote to Bishop Tomline deploring Pitt's junction with "a man whose imbecility and falsehood, under Mr. Pitt's own sanction," had weakened the country. Pitt would now gain a few votes, no additional talents, and an increase of rancour in the Opposition. "We shall," adds Rose, "drag on a wretched existence and expire not creditably. What next will happen God only knows."[1] Canning was equally annoyed at the new Coalition.[2] His sharp tongue and still sharper pen had deeply annoyed Addington. Who, indeed, would not have resented this reference in the "Apothecary's Hall (First of April)":

> When his speeches hobble vilely
> How "Hear him" bursts from brother Hiley!
> When his faltering periods lag
> Hark to the cheers of brother Bragge!

Sarcasms on Hawkesbury had also annoyed that susceptible Minister; so that in June 1804 Canning offered to resign his Treasurership of the Navy. The matter was patched up, only to be opened once more in the winter. Pitt sought to mediate between the bard and his victim, but failed to elicit from Canning an apology as complete as Hawkesbury demanded. Finally, on 18th January, Canning informed Pitt that, as Hawkesbury had left his letter unanswered for three days, he declined to take the further steps which Pitt recommended.[3] Is it surprising that the health of the Prime Minister began to suffer? Friends noted with concern his thinness and a hacking cough. Nevertheless, he rode out successfully the squalls of the session of 1805, beating off the onset of Sheridan against his Defence Bill, and defeating an inopportune motion of Fox for Catholic Emancipation.

On this subject Pitt secretly sympathized with Fox, but his hands were tied both by his promise of March 1801 to the King not to bring up the subject during his reign, and recently by his union with Addington. The Irish Catholics knew of these difficulties; and at meetings held by their leading men at the house of James Ryan, a wealthy Dublin merchant, in the autumn of 1804, both Lord Fingall and Counsellor Scully deprecated a petition to Parliament as alike useless and embarrassing. Scully urged that they must conciliate one whose "opinions had literally proved of great weight in the Catholic cause. . . . The Catholics owe him [Pitt] respect for his enlarged and manly conceptions of the necessity of relieving them, and the dignified energy with which he publicly expressed those conceptions." A Committee was chosen to consider the matter and communicate with Pitt. It included Fingall, Sir Thomas French, Scully, and others. At the third meeting at Ryan's house, on 17th November, Keogh sharply blamed Fingall for opposing the petition, and commented adversely on the silence of Pitt. Scully inferred from it "that he is favourably disposed, but in some way, to them unknown, not in a situation in which he can freely act," or even explain his reticence; but no Catholic wished to embarrass him.[1] Nevertheless, the petition was resolved on; and it is clear that Fox encouraged the petitioners rather from the hope of embarrassing Pitt than of carrying Catholic Emancipation.[2]

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

[2] Stanhope, iv, 244-8.

[3] See the letter in "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters."

In March 1805 Scully came to London, and saw Fox, Nepean, and Grey. Pitt received him and others of the Irish deputation at Downing Street on the 12th. Scully noted in his diary: "He [Pitt] wore dirty boots and odd-fashioned, lank leather breeches, but otherwise well dressed and cleanly, his hair powdered, etc. He was very courteous and cordial in words and looks, but his carriage was stiff and strait, perhaps naturally so. His face cold and harsh, rather selfish, but acute and sensible. We took our seats after much reciprocal ceremony." Pitt declined Fingall's request that he should present the Catholic petition, though he admitted that the measure would be most salutary whenever the proper time would arrive; but he added with a smile that he could not tell when that would be. The deputation failed to move him from this position, and thereafter committed its cause to the Opposition.[3] Despite excellent speeches by Fox and Grey, and by Grenville and Holland in the Lords, the motions for Catholic Emancipation were rejected by large majorities. The speech of Pitt on 14th May, to which reference has already been made, naturally lacked energy and fire; he opposed Fox's motion solely on the ground of present expediency.[4]

The worst trial of the session was the impeachment of his old friend, Lord Melville. As Treasurer of the Navy in Pitt's former Administration, he had been guilty of a serious irregularity in not preventing Deputy Treasurer Trotter from using the sum of £10,000 for private speculation. Suspicions having been aroused on this and other grounds, a Commission was appointed to sift the matter to the bottom. The tenth Report dealing with these charges came out on 17th or 18th March; and Wilberforce, who then chanced to be with Pitt, noted how eagerly, without waiting to cut open the pages, he sought to tear out the secret. It proved to be highly unfavourable to Melville. In vain did Wilberforce and Bankes seek to persuade Pitt to adopt a judicial attitude on this question. Though his friendship with Melville had cooled, yet it was still strong, and he finally agreed with Lord Sidmouth to press for a committee of inquiry. Only so could he count on the support of the Addingtonians. On 8th April, then, he resolutely defended Melville against the aspersions of Whitbread, maintaining that the evidence before the Commission was far from conclusive, and moving that a select Committee of the House should make further investigations.

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[1] "H. O." Ireland (Corresp.), 99.

[2] "Mems. of Fox," iv, 45, 68, 72, 75.

[3] See an interesting account by Dr. Hunt, "Transactions of the Royal Hist. Soc." (1908), pp. 7-16.

[4] Hansard, iv, 1013-22, 1060.

The debate was long and stormy. Petty, Tierney, George Ponsonby, and Fox censured Melville severely. Canning with his wonted brilliance, Castlereagh with the usual laboured infelicity, sought to strengthen the defence; but it had almost collapsed when, about 4 a.m. of 9th April, Wilberforce arose. At once Pitt bent forward and sent an eager glance down the Treasury bench at his old friend; for the verdict of a conscientious and independent member at such a time is decisive. Speaking with the calm of deep conviction, the member for Yorkshire declared against Melville, whereupon Pitt sank back with signs of deep pain. The division showed 216 for and 216 against the motion of censure. The Speaker, Abbott, turned deathly white, and after a long and trying pause gave the casting vote against the Government. Then the pent up feelings burst forth. The groups of the Opposition united in yells of triumph; one member gave the "view holloa," and others shouted to Pitt to resign. He meanwhile pressed forward his hat to hide the tears which stole down his cheeks. Fitzharris, son of Lord Malmesbury, and a few devoted friends formed a phalanx to screen him from the insolent stare of Colonel Wardle and others who were crowding round the exit to see "how Billy Pitt looked after it"; and he was helped out of the House in a half unconscious state. The blow told severely on a frame already enfeebled by overwork and worry.[1]

Whitbread's further motion for impeachment was rejected (11th June), but a similar motion succeeded a fortnight later.

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[1] Hansard, iv, 255-325; "Life of Wilberforce," iii, 219-23; "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 338, 347; "Lord Colchester's Diaries," i, 544-9.

Public opinion, however, soon began to veer round and pronounce the conduct of the Opposition rancorous. Melville's relative, Sir Charles Middleton, in a letter to Wilberforce, denounced it as sheer persecution, seeing that the nation had suffered no loss, and Melville had served it many years with indefatigable zeal. As for Melville, he retired to his Highland seat, "Dunira," and in the last letter which he wrote to Pitt, dated 11th November 1805, expressed gratitude for Pitt's recent message that his energy at the Admiralty had largely contributed to the triumph at Trafalgar. Melville's feelings further appeared in the postscript, that Nelson's death was "enviable beyond expression," as placing "his fair fame beyond the reach of caprice, envy, or malevolence."[1] Pitt did not live on to see the vindication of his old friend. On 12th June 1806, after a trial of twelve days in Westminster Hall, the Peers acquitted Melville on all the ten counts, the prosecution failing to prove that he had benefited by Trotter's irregular use of the sum of £10,000. It is worth noting that Whitbread in his final attack declared his belief that Pitt in similar circumstances would have died rather than connive at such an irregularity.[2] This statement may be set against the Bacchic outburst of Creevey, after the hostile vote in Parliament, that Pitt had betrayed Melville in order to save himself from ruin.[3]

Pitt, seconded in this by Grenville, urged the appointment of Middleton, whose sagacity and long experience at the Admiralty had of late furnished the First Lord with invaluable counsel. True, he was eighty years of age, but neither had his frame lost vigour nor his mind alertness. Seeing that his reputation as a naval expert was unequalled, Pitt little expected to encounter the stiff opposition of Lords Sidmouth and Buckinghamshire to the appointment, which they designed for Buckinghamshire, Hawkesbury, or Charles Yorke. The King, too, probably influenced by Sidmouth, expressed his disapproval of Middleton, preferring those just named, or Castlereagh, or even Chatham. In a matter which concerned the safety of the nation Pitt was inexorable, facing for several days the threats of resignation of his two colleagues and the disapproval of the King. Finally he carried his point, the two lords being pacified by the assurance that Middleton's appointment would be temporary. The King also consented to raise him to the peerage as Lord Barham, adding, however, the proviso that he should attend the Cabinet only during the discussion of naval affairs. In this grudging way did the Monarch and Sidmouth permit Middleton to reap the reward of life-long service and the nation to benefit by his unique experience. Only of late has the work done by Barham during the Trafalgar campaign been duly set forth; and it is therefore possible now to estimate the service rendered by Pitt in insisting on his appointment even at the risk of the secession of the Addingtonian group.[1]

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[1] Chevening MSS.

[2] "Trial of Lord Melville" (1806), 256-9, 370, 378.

[3] "Creevey Papers," i, 34.

Before referring to naval affairs, we must glance at the efforts of Pitt to frame a Coalition of the Powers against France. In the middle of January 1805 he had important interviews with Novossiltzoff, the envoy whom the Czar Alexander had despatched to London on an important mission. For this ardent young reformer Alexander had drawn up secret instructions which the curious may read in the Memoirs of his Minister, Czartoryski.[2] They illustrate the mingling of sentimentality and statecraft, of viewiness and ambition, which accounts for the strange oscillations of Muscovite policy between altruistic philosophy and brutal self-seeking. At present the Russian Janus turned his modern face westwards. Alexander insisted on the need of tearing from France the mask of liberty which she had so long and so profitably worn. Against the naturalism of Rousseau, which supplied Napoleon with excellent reasons for every annexation, Alexander resolved to appeal to historical rights and the Balance of Power. Yet he also resolved to uphold the rights of all the peoples concerned. They must be reconciled to their rulers so as to harmonize the claims of legitimacy and liberty. Thus, the King of Sardinia, when restored to his throne at Turin, was to be induced to grant a Constitution. The Germanic System was to be rescued from chaos by the grant of free federal institutions. The independence of the Italian, Helvetic, and Dutch Republics was a matter of urgency, those States being also strengthened against French aggressions. Finally, Russia and England were, if possible, to secure the friendship of Turkey.

With these aims Pitt declared his entire concurrence, a just and lasting peace being the first of British interests. He developed these notions in a remarkable document of date 19th January 1805. We may be sure that it is his; for, an accident having befallen the Earl of Harrowby at the close of 1804, Lord Mulgrave took his place at the Foreign Office, and a new comer would not have ventured to impose his own views as to the future of Europe. Pitt now recurred to his plans of the year 1798 for assuring the repose of the Continent. In brief, they were the aggrandisement of Austria in Northern Italy and of Prussia in the Low Countries so as to form barriers against France. The Italian Republic must therefore be divided between the Hapsburgs and the King of Sardinia, the latter also absorbing the Genoese Republic, which had forfeited all claim to consideration. Pitt did not enter into details respecting Belgium; but probably he intended to offer it to Prussia, in order to still her cravings for Hanover. Such was his proposal to the Court of Berlin in October 1805.[1] Conscious, perhaps, that the present plans were not consonant with the benevolent idealism of Russian policy, which, however, stole sidelong glances at Constantinople, Pitt declared that only by these arrangements could the peace of Europe be secured. They were therefore "not repugnant to the most sacred principles of justice and public morality." In order further to curb the aggressions of Napoleon, the Great Powers were mutually to guarantee their possessions, thus laying the foundation of a system of public right.[2]

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[1] "Barham Papers" (Navy Records Society), iii; Corbett, "Trafalgar Campaign," 70-2; Stanhope, iv, 287; Pellew, ii 356-64.

[2] Czartoryski, "Mems.," ii, ch. vii.

This scheme clearly foreshadows the system of alliances and compromises carried out by Castlereagh in the Treaty of Chaumont nine years later. Pitt also assented to the Czar's proposal that the final settlement should be guaranteed by international agreements forming a basis for the new European polity, a suggestion in which lies the germ of the Holy Alliance. It would be absurd to hold Pitt responsible for the strange and unforeseen developments of the years 1815-25. But it is to be regretted that fear of Napoleon should have obliterated his earlier aim of forming a defensive league of the weaker States. His cure for the evils of French domination was scarcely better than the evils themselves. The installation of the Hapsburgs at Venice and Milan, of Victor Emmanuel I at Genoa, of Frederick William of

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[1] "F. O.," Prussia, 70; Rose, "Napoleonic Studies," 54-8; Rose, "Napoleon," ii, 54.

[2] Garden, "Traités," viii, 317-23; Alison, App. to ch. xxxix.

Prussia at Brussels, could not permanently improve the lot of the Italian and Belgian peoples. So soon as we formulate the question we see that, as in 1798, Pitt left their welfare out of count. He aimed merely at piling up barriers against France, and trusted to some vague arrangement with the Czar for safeguarding the political rights of the bartered peoples.

Pitt's reliance on the statics of statecraft rather than on the dynamics of nationality tells against the credibility of the oft-repeated story that he prophesied the liberation of Europe by the enthusiasm and efforts of the Spaniards. Wellington afterwards told the Spanish general, Alava, that Pitt, on hearing of the disaster of Ulm, made this prophecy at a dinner party at which he (then Sir Arthur Wellesley) was present. Difficulties of time and place militate against the anecdote, which, moreover, is out of harmony with the sentiments expressed in Pitt's speeches, letters, and despatches.[1] Further, his experience of Spain was such as to inspire him with deep distrust; and, finally, the cast of his mind was so far objective as to forbid the indulgence of speculations on the little-known topic of nationality. Distrusting novel theories, he sought to utilize forces of tried potency. He worked by diplomatic methods through Governments, not through the tumultuary efforts of peoples. Dependence on a nation so backward as the Spaniards would have seemed to him madness. Even if he could have seen the surprising events of May—June 1808, he would probably have distrusted the spirit which prompted them. In truth, he lacked the sympathetic instinct which led Canning at that crisis to side with the Spanish patriots and thus open a new chapter in the history of Europe.

Yet it is but just to remember that Pitt the diplomatic bargainer of 1805 differed from Pitt the upholder of weak States in 1790, only because the times had completely changed. Against the destructive schemes of Joseph II, Catharine II, and Hertzberg he worked on the whole successfully. But now Poland was gone; Sweden and Turkey were safe; the German tangle had been cut by the Secularizations of Church domains in 1803.

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[1] Toreno ("War of Independence in Spain, vol. i, *ad fin.*) had the story from Alava, who connected it with the arrival of the news of Ulm, on 2nd November. Pitt said: "All is not lost if I can succeed in raising up a national war in Europe, and this must have its commencement in Spain." But Malmesbury ("Diaries," iv, 340), who was present, does not name the incident, and states that Pitt disbelieved the news (see ch. xxiv).

Now the danger was from the West. France had swallowed up her weaker neighbours. Napoleon dominated Spain, Italy, Switzerland, the Rhenish States, and the Netherlands. Russian policy, subversive under Catharine, was in a European sense conservative under Alexander. Then the most damaging thrusts to the European fabric came from Vienna and St. Petersburg. Now they came from Paris. Pitt therefore sought to construct a rampart out of the weak States bordering on France. As the Barrier Treaties of a century earlier were directed against Louis XIV, so now Pitt sought to inaugurate an enlarged Barrier policy as a safeguard against Napoleon. The efforts of at least half a million of trained troops being available, the time had apparently come for a final effort to preserve the Balance of Power before it was irretrievably impaired.

For a time the Russian and British Governments seemed in complete accord. Novossiltzoff, on his return to St. Petersburg, wrote to Pitt on 20th March 1805 (N.S.), describing the entire concurrence of his master with the principles on which they had agreed at London. In about eight days he would leave for Berlin to put forth his utmost endeavours to gain the alliance of that Court. He would then proceed to Paris to present the Czar's ultimatum. A refusal was expected; but his master believed it more dignified to take all reasonable means of ensuring peace. The orders for mobilizing the Russian troops would go forth at the time of his departure for Berlin. Before his arrival at Paris, he hoped to receive from London full powers authorizing him to speak for Great Britain as well as for Russia.[1]

All this implied the closest union and sympathy. But now Alexander showed the other side of his nature. He sought to drive a hard bargain with Pitt. Firstly, he strove to obtain the promise of a larger British force to form an integral part of a Russian expedition for the deliverance of the Kingdom of Naples. In view of the paucity of our disposable forces, Pitt had sought to limit the sphere of action to Sicily and the neighbouring parts of Calabria, the defence of Sicily, the key of the Mediterranean and the outwork of Egypt, being now and throughout the war one of the cardinal aims of British policy. An expedition under General Sir James Craig was about to set sail for Malta and Messina; and the Czar required that, when strengthened, it should act in any part of South Italy, under a Russian general. After wearisome correspondence, a compromise was arrived at; and on 19th April 1805 Craig set sail from Portsmouth on his perilous voyage over seas now and again swept by French and Spanish warships. By good fortune he escaped these many dangers, and reached Malta, there setting free seasoned troops for operations in South Italy. The hardihood of Pitt in sending forth this expedition has often provoked criticism. But it was worth while to run serious risks to save Sicily from the grip of Napoleon, and to wrest from him the initiative which he had hitherto enjoyed unchallenged. Besides, the Czar insisted on that effort, and made it almost a *sine quâ non* of his alliance. In a military sense the results were contemptible; in the diplomatic sphere they were very great.[1]

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[1] Pretyman MSS.

Twelve days before Craig set sail, Czartoryski worried or coaxed the British ambassador at St. Petersburg, Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, into signing a provisional treaty of alliance. The Czar now promised to set in motion half a million of men (half of them being Austrians, and only 115,000 Russians) so as to drive the French from Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and the Low Countries, England subsidizing the allied forces at the rate of £1,250,000 a year for every 100,000 men actually employed. The liberated lands were to have the right of building their own fortresses and choosing their own constitutions. But firstly, Alexander would seek to restore peace to Europe; and to this end he would consent to Napoleon placing his brother Joseph on the throne of North Italy, either in Piedmont or in the Italian Republic, shadowy realms being outlined in the Peninsula for the consolation of the dispossessed King of Sardinia. But the sting of the proposal was in its tail. Alexander suggested that, to secure the boon of peace, England should restore her maritime conquests in the war, and also Malta if Napoleon insisted on this last, the island being then garrisoned by Russians. In its blend of hazy theorizings on general topics with astute egotism in Russian affairs, the scheme is highly characteristic, peace being assured by means which would substitute Muscovite for British rule at Malta; while in the event of war, Great Britain was to pay at the rate of £6,250,000 a year for campaigns that would aggrandise the continental States at the expense of France.[1]

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[1] Rose, "Third Coalition," 25, 32, 44, 61, 66, 73, 76, 87, 97, etc.; Mr. Julian Corbett, "The Trafalgar Campaign," chs. i, ii. For a critique on Pitt's Mediterranean plans, see Bunbury's "Great War with France," 183-95.

What must have been the feelings of Pitt when he perused this Byzantine offer? While prepared to give way on some parts of the January proposals, he was determined to hold fast to Malta. The island had not been named by him and Novossiltzoff, its present destiny being assumed as irrevocably fixed. But now Alexander swung back to the aims of his father, the domination of the Central Mediterranean from the impregnable fortress of Valetta. Probably some of the Knights of the Order of St. John who had sought refuge in Russia gained the ear of Alexander in the spring of 1805, and produced the startling change in his policy just described. Whatever the cause, Pitt's answer could be none other than a firm refusal. In Count Simon Vorontzoff, Russian ambassador at London, he found a secret sympathizer, who entered heartily into his plans for the salvation of Europe, foreseeing that only by the retention of Malta for the Union Jack could the Mediterranean be saved from becoming a French lake; and that if either Gower or Pitt wavered on this question, the country would disown them.[2] Official etiquette, of course, compelled him to proffer Alexander's demand, and to declare that, unless Pitt gave way about Malta, there was an end of all hope of the alliance. Here Pitt intervened with the statesmanlike remark: "It will not save Europe. The Mediterranean, the Levant and Egypt, will be in the power of France the moment a British squadron ceases to have for base a good port protected by formidable fortifications. . . . So, whatever pain it causes us (and it is indeed great) we must give up the hope of seeing the alliance ratified, since its express condition is our renunciation of Malta. We will continue the war alone. It will be maritime."

Thus Malta, the final cause of the Great War, now promised to limit that war. Vorontzoff prevailed on Pitt to defer reporting his refusal to St. Petersburg. But on 27th May he stated that the last ray of hope had disappeared, as neither Court would give way. On 5th June, then, Mulgrave penned for Gower a despatch summarizing Pitt's reasons why England must retain Malta. She was ready to restore her valuable conquests in the East and West Indies, but the key of the Mediterranean she

[1] Rose, "Third Coalition," 127-30.

[2] Czartoryski, "Mems.," ii, 74-6.

must not and would not surrender. Neither would she relax her maritime code as the Emperor of Russia now insisted; for experience had shown it to be necessary for the equipment of the British fleets and the crippling of the enemy's naval construction. In the maintenance of these fleets lay the only hope of assuring the salvation of Europe. A more convincing exposition of the importance of Sea Power has never gone forth from a Government office.[1]

The deadlock was therefore complete. But now, as happened more than once in the development of the Coalitions, Napoleon himself came to the rescue. Whether he was aware of the breakdown of the Anglo-Russian negotiation is uncertain; but his remark to Fouché—"I shall be able to strike the blow before the old Coalition machines are ready"—and his conduct in Italy in the months of May and June 1805 bear the imprint of a boundless confidence, which, on any other supposition, savours of madness. He well knew that no continental ruler but Gustavus of Sweden desired war with him. Austria maintained her timid reserve. Alexander was ready to negotiate with him through the medium of Novossiltzoff, who was now at Berlin awaiting permission to proceed to Paris. The predilections of Frederick William of Prussia for France were notorious; for Hanover was his goal; and he and his counsellers saw far more hope of securing it from Napoleon than from King George.[2]

Prudence and patience were therefore peculiarly necessary for Napoleon at this juncture. He had the game in his hands if he would but concentrate all his energies against England and leave severely alone the land which then most interested Russia and Austria, namely, Italy. But, either from the ingrained restlessness of his nature, which chafed at the stalemate at Boulogne, or from contempt of "the old Coalition machines," or from an innate conviction that Italy was his own political preserve, he now took two steps which aroused the anger of the Russian and Austrian Emperors. On 26th May 1805 he crowned himself King of Italy in the cathedral of Milan, thereby welding that populous realm indissolubly to his Empire. On 4th June he annexed outright the Genoese or Ligurian Republic. Both acts were flagrant infractions of his

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[1] Czartoryski, "Mems.," ii, 78; Rose, "Third Coalition," 155-64.

[2] *Ibid.*, 232; Ulmann, "Russisch-preussische Politik"; Hansing, "Hardenberg und die dritte Coalition."

Treaty of Lunéville with Austria of four years before; and they contemptuously overturned the Balance of Power which Alexander was striving to re-establish. The results were soon apparent. "This man is insatiable," exclaimed Alexander; "his ambition knows no bounds; he is a scourge of the world: he wants war; well, he shall have it, and the sooner the better."

Novossiltzoff left Berlin for St. Petersburg; and his despatches of 10th July to Vorontzoff and to Hardenberg, Foreign Minister at Berlin, prove conclusively that it was Napoleon's annexation of Genoa which ended all hope of peace on the Continent.[1] The French Emperor himself admitted as much on the occasion of his visit to Genoa. Looking down on that beautiful city, he exclaimed: "Ah! It was worth a war." In order to work French patriotism up to the necessary pitch he on 30th May 1805 ordered Fouché to have caricatures made at Paris depicting John Bull, purse in hand, entreating the Powers to take his money and fight France. Insults to Russia and England make up the rest of that angry and almost illegible scrawl.[2] In his heart he knew that the war sprang from his resolve to make the Mediterranean a French lake and Italy an annexe of his imperial fabric.

The sequel may be told very briefly. On 28th July the Court of St. Petersburg agreed to Pitt's version of the Anglo-Russian compact; and on 9th August the British ambassador at St. Petersburg pledged his country to join the two Empires if Napoleon rejected the conditions of peace still left open to him. In that case Gower promised to assure the advance of five months' subsidy at the rate mentioned above.[3] It is needless to say that Napoleon rejected all thought of compromise; and Austria began to hurry her troops up the banks of the Danube for the Bavarian campaign.[4] Thus Pitt won the diplomatic game. Or rather, his opponent gave it to him by the last reckless move at Genoa. The wrath of Alexander at this affront obliterated his annoyance at the retention of Malta by Great Britain;

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[1] "Paget Papers," ii, 186; Sir G. Jackson, "Diaries," i, 304, 458-60; Rose, "Third Coalition," 180.

[2] "Lettres inédites de Napoléon," i, 50.

[3] Rose, "Third Coalition," 279-82. On 9th August Austria allied herself to Russia.

[4] For a time her action was unknown at London; and Pitt and Mulgrave outlined a plan of campaign turning largely on the liberation of South and Central Italy. See Mr. Corbett, "Trafalgar Campaign," App. B.

and both he and the Emperor Francis now prepared to enter the lists against Napoleon.

Meanwhile, Pitt sought to strengthen his Ministry in view of the desertion of the Addingtonians. Two of them, Hiley Addington and Bond, spoke bitterly against Melville during the debates of June, which led Gillray to represent them as jackasses about to kick a wounded lion. So annoyed was Pitt as to refuse them promotions which they expected, whereupon Sidmouth and Buckinghamshire tendered their resignations. The old friends parted sorrowfully after a final interview at Pitt's house on Putney Heath (7th July). Camden now became President of the Council, and Castlereagh Minister at War, Harrowby re-entering the Cabinet as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

As the prospect of further taxation was calculated to depress Pitt's supporters and inspirit the Opposition, he proceeded to Weymouth in the middle of September to lay before the King an important proposal. The formation of a truly national Administration being more than ever essential, he besought George to admit certain members of the parties of Fox and Grenville, especially in order to facilitate the passing of the next Budget. The Monarch, however, was obdurate, asserting that Pitt had done well in the past session and would probably fare better still in the next. On 22nd September he repeated these statements to Rose, whom he called to him on the esplanade, and was quite unconvinced by his arguments that in the present state of parties the Budget could scarcely be passed, and that, if Pitt chanced to be laid up with a fit of gout for two or three weeks, there would be an end of the Administration. The King would not hear of any change, and proved more intractable on this topic than in the year before, during his stay at Cuffnells.[1] In fact, in Rose's manuscript is a statement, prudently omitted from the published Diaries, that George, on returning to his residence at Weymouth, declared his resolve rather to risk a civil war than to admit Fox into his councils.[2] Thus ended Pitt's last effort to form a national Administration fitted to cope with the gigantic power of Napoleon.

It is difficult to realize the multiplicity of the cares which pressed upon Pitt. Rose feared that he would soon succumb to the burden; for, apart from the defence of a weak Government against a strong Opposition, Pitt transacted very much of the business of the War Office and Foreign Office, besides assisting the Admiralty and the Commander-in-Chief. No one in Europe, with the exception of Napoleon, worked so hard; and Pitt, besides being ten years older than the Emperor, had far less physical strength. We may judge, then, of the effect produced by a life such as Lady Hester Stanhope described in a passage of more than usual credibility: "Ah doctor," she said in her Lebanon days, "what a life was his! Roused from sleep (for he was a good sleeper) with a despatch from Lord Melville; then down to Windsor; then, if he had half an hour to spare, trying to swallow something; Mr. Adams with a paper, Mr. Long with another; then Mr. Rose: then, with a little bottle of cordial confection in his pocket, off to the House until three or four in the morning; then home to a hot supper for two or three hours more, to talk over what was to be done next day:—and wine, and wine. Scarcely up next morning, when 'tat-tat-tat,' twenty or thirty people one after another, and the horses walking before the door from two till sunset, waiting for him. It was enough to kill a man—it was murder."[1]

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[1] G. Rose, "Diaries," ii, 198-200.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

One who knew Pitt well gave wise advice to his secretary, William Dacre Adams. "Attend to your meals regularly even if you sit up or rise the earlier for it to get through the business. I have often been told that half Mr. Pitt's complaints were originally brought on by fasting too long and indeed only eating when he found it convenient, which ruined the tone of his stomach."[2] These statements explain the reason for the collapse of Pitt's strength late in the year. Hester's concluding remark is somewhat hysterical, but it is nearer the truth than the charge that Pitt was greedy of power. He killed himself by persistent overwork on behalf of a nation which did not understand him, and in the service of a Monarch who refused to allow him to strengthen his Administration.

It is impossible now to feel one's way along all the threads which Pitt held in his hands. But occasionally a chance reference reveals his connection with designs of vast moment. The following is a case in point. Castlereagh wrote to him, probably on 20th August 1805, in terms which show that Pitt took a leading part in one of the decisions bearing on the fate of the naval campaign which culminated at Trafalgar. The daring and wisdom of his naval policy in 1805 has lately been fully vindicated.[1] But the following letter throws new light on the complex problem which arose after the indecisive success gained by Admiral Calder over Villeneuve's French and Spanish fleets off Cape Finisterre on 22nd July, and while the subsequent movements of those fleets were not yet definitely known. Baird's expedition at Cork was destined for the reduction of the Cape (ever Pitt's pre-occupation) so soon as the way was fairly safe.

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[1] "Lady Hester Stanhope's Mems.," ii, 63.

[2] Chevening MSS. See, too, G. Rose, "Diaries," ii, 235, as to Pitt's reliance on "cordial medicines."

Downing S^{t} Tuesday 3 P.M.[2]

MY DEAR SIR,

I have just seen Lord Hawkesbury and Lord Barham, Adm^{l} Cornwallis having anticipated your intentions by detaching 20 sail of the line off Ferrol, and the wind being now favourable, it appears to us that no time should be lost in ordering Sir D. Baird to sail. As L^{d} H. and L^{d} B. seem to entertain no doubt of your approving of this step, I shall send the orders without delay. I shall remain in town tonight and be at your disposal as best suits your engagements.

Ever yours,

CASTLEREAGH.

The most interesting words in this letter are "your intentions." They seem to imply that the plan of detaching part of Admiral Cornwallis's fleet off Brest to the assistance of Calder off the North West of Spain was originally Pitt's own, not Lord Barham's, as has been hitherto supposed. They must not be pressed too much; for the advice of Barham, First Lord of the Admiralty, must have been paramount. Nevertheless the proposal was evidently Pitt's as well as Barham's. The fact that Cornwallis anticipated it bespeaks the resolve alike of Ministers and the admiral at all costs to stop Villeneuve off Finisterre and prevent the naval concentration in French waters on which Napoleon laid so much stress. The success of the British counter-stroke is well known. Villeneuve, having been roughly handled by Calder, put into Ferrol, and finally, a prey to discouragement, made off for Cadiz, thus upsetting Napoleon's scheme for the invasion of England. In due course Nelson returned to England for a brief time of rest at "dear, dear Merton," and then set off on his last cruise. Before his departure he had an interview with Pitt at Downing Street—the only occasion, I believe, on which they met—and found in the ante-room Sir Arthur Wellesley, just returned from India. At the end of the interview Pitt flattered the great seaman by an act of attention which he thus described: "Mr. Pitt paid me a compliment, which, I believe, he would not have paid to a Prince of the Blood. When I rose to go, he left the room with me and attended me to the carriage." By attentions such as these Chatham was wont to stimulate the patriotism of our warriors; and on this occasion his son played an equally inspiriting part. Imagination strives to picture the scene, especially when England's greatest statesman and greatest seaman passed through the ante-room where stood the future victor of Waterloo.[1]

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[1] By Mr. Julian Corbett, "The Campaign of Trafalgar." Mr. Corbett has kindly helped me to fix the probable date of Castlereagh's letter.

[2] Pitt MSS., 121. In Pitt MSS., 111, is a hasty and undated note of Pitt to Barham (probably of 27th December 1805) asking him to consider "whether it might not be expedient to direct Sir John Warren to proceed to Cape de Verde, and if he there found that Sir James Duckworth was gone to the West Indies, but not upon certain information of the enemy having preceded him, that Sir J. Warren should be ordered on to the Cape, unless he received intelligence that the enemy had taken another course." He adds that this suggestion arises out of the news received from the Cape, where French troops were expected. In that case the operations would be protracted. Pitt hoped that Warren would be back in five months, that is by 1st June, before which time the French preparations for the invasion of England would not be far advanced. Evidently, then, Pitt sought Middleton's advice direct on the complex problem of defending England and guarding the overland and the sea routes to India at the same time. On this see Corbett, "Trafalgar Campaign," 236-8.

Never again were those three heroes to meet. Nelson departed for Trafalgar. Pitt resumed the work which was wearing him to death, nerved, however, by the consciousness that the despatch of Nelson to the Mediterranean would foil Napoleon's project of making that sea a French lake, "the principal aim of my policy" as he declared it to be. In that quarter, then, Pitt won a decisive victory which was destined to save not only that sea, but the Continent from the domination of France. Whether a glimpse of the future course of events opened out to the wearied gaze of the statesman we know not. All we know is that in mid-December, when the "Victory" lay jury-masted and wind-bound for three days off Walmer Castle, the Lord Warden was at Bath, in hope of gaining health and strength for a struggle which concerned him even more nearly than that in the Mediterranean, namely, the liberation of North Germany and the Dutch Netherlands from the Napoleonic yoke.

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[1] Wellington in 1834 told Croker that they met in the anteroom of the Secretary of State, Castlereagh (Croker, "Diaries," ii, 234).

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LAST STRUGGLE

> Heavens! What has Prussia to answer for! For nothing less, in my mind, than every calamity which has befallen Europe for more than ten years.—GENERAL PAGET TO SIR ARTHUR PAGET, 24*th January* 1806.

THE opening moves in the great game between Pitt and Napoleon were divided with a curious evenness. As we have seen, the French Emperor's defiant annexation of Genoa obliterated the anger of the Czar at Pitt's insistence on the retention of Malta; and if Pitt's high-handed conduct forced Spain to declare against England, yet, on the other hand, Napoleon wantonly challenged Austria and Russia to a conflict. The first events of the war showed a similar balance. On 20th October the French Emperor compelled the Austrian commander, General Mack, to surrender at or near Ulm in Swabia with almost the whole of an army of some 70,000 men. On the next day Nelson destroyed the French and Spanish fleets at Trafalgar. So quickly did the forcefulness or ineptitude of four commanders determine the course of events. By the end of October the tricolour waved triumphant over Central Europe; but the Union Jack was thenceforth scarcely challenged by sea; and Britain began to exert that unseen but resistless pressure upon her enemy which gradually edged him to his ruin. Consequently the appalling failures of the Third Coalition on land only delayed the final triumph on which the serene genius of Pitt surely counted.

At first everything seemed to favour his designs. Part of Napoleon's army in its hurried march from North Germany towards Ulm violated the neutrality of the Prussian principality of Anspach, apparently by command of the Emperor. This short cut to success nearly entailed disaster; for it earned the sharp resentment of Prussia at a time when he especially valued her friendship. Indeed, so soon as he resolved to turn the "Army of England" against Austria, he despatched his most trusted aide-de-camp, Duroc, to Berlin, to tempt that Court with that alluring bait, Hanover. Russia and England were, however, making equal efforts in the hope of gaining the help of the magnificent army of Frederick William III. For a time Pitt also hoped to add the South German States, and in all to set in motion a mass of 650,000 men against France, Austria contributing 250,000, Russia 180,000, Prussia 100,000 (later on he bargained for 180,000), Sardinia 25,000, Naples 20,000, Sweden 16,000, and the small German States the remainder. Napoleon, on the other hand, strove to paralyse the efforts of the Coalition by securing the alliance or the friendly neutrality of Prussia. With 200,000 hostile or doubtful troops on her frontier, Austria could do little, and Russia still less. Further, as he still had French troops in one or two fortresses of Hanover, he could utter the words so often on the lips of Bismarck—*Beati possidentes.* Hanover belonged of right to George III; but Napoleon could will it away to Prussia.

Thus the fortunes of Europe depended largely on Frederick William. Unfortunately he was incapable of rising to the height of the situation; for he utterly lacked the virile qualities which raised the House of Hohenzollern above petty compeers in Swabia to fame and prosperity. Essentially mediocre, and conscious of his slender endowments, he, like Louis XVI, nearly always hesitated, and therefore generally lost. His character was a dull compound of negations. Prone neither to vice nor to passion, he was equally devoid of charm and graciousness. Freezing men by his coldness, he failed to overawe them by superiority; and, with a weak man's dislike of genius and strength, he avoided great men, preferring trimmers like Haugwitz and Lombard, who played upon his foibles, and saved him from disagreeable decisions. The commanding personality of Stein inspired in him nervous dislike which deepened into peevish dread. Only in the depths of disaster, into which his own weakness was to plunge him, did he have recourse to that saviour of Prussia.

By the side of Frederick William was that radiant figure, Queen Louisa, who recalls the contrast between Marie Antoinette and her uninteresting, hapless spouse. For Louisa, too, had ambition and the power of inspiring devotion, though etiquette and jealousy forbade her intervention in affairs of State;[1] otherwise the Prussian Government would have shaken off that paralysing indecision which left its people friendless and spiritless on the bursting of the storm a year later. For the present, the King's chief adviser, Hardenberg, sought to impart to Prussian policy a trend more favourable to England and Russia. Conscious of the need of a better frontier on the west and of the longing of his master for the greater part of Hanover, he sought to attain this end by means not wholly opposed to the feelings of George III and the policy of Pitt. Above all, he strove to end the humiliating subservience of his Court to France, which galled the spirit of all patriotic Prussians. Their great desire was to join the new Coalition even though such a step entailed war with Napoleon. They rejoiced at the news of Admiral Calder's victory off Finisterre, and hailed every sign of war at St. Petersburg and Vienna.[2] On the other hand, the French party was strong at Court. Haugwitz, its head, was still nominally Minister for Foreign Affairs, and, though often absent for long periods on his Silesian domain, resumed the control of them when he returned to Berlin. This singular arrangement enabled the King to keep up the game of political see-saw which brought relief to him, disgust to his would-be allies, and ruin to his country.

To tilt the balance in favour of the Coalition was now the chief aim of Pitt. And who shall say that, if Prussia, with strength still unimpaired, had played the part which her enfeebled people insisted on taking up in 1813, the doom of Napoleon might not have been assured in the autumn and winter which we associate with the names of Ulm and Austerlitz? All this was possible, nay, probable, had Frederick William surveyed the situation with the sound judgement of Pitt. But the British statesman laboured under one great disadvantage. He could not offer to Prussia what she most wanted. He could do no more than promise to extend her western confines to Antwerp and Ostend; and she far preferred Hanover, as solidifying her straggling western lands, without bringing her near to France. Here was an almost insuperable obstacle; and we can imagine that, like his father, he cursed Britain's connection with Hanover. His chief hope was, that Prussia would discern her true interest in acquiring less by honourable means than very much from Napoleon, whose gifts were often perilous. Russia, too, at that time seemed to adopt the British view of the Hanoverian question; and in the early autumn that Power mustered her second army on the borders of Prussia in a highly threatening manner. Finally, the Czar declared that if his troops were refused a passage through Silesia, he would make his way by force, the Pitt Cabinet informing him that, in that case, the liberal subsidies intended for Prussia, would be added to those already on their way to St. Petersburg. But even threats failed to bring Frederick William to a decision; and Hardenberg announced that a forcible entry of the Russians would involve war with Prussia.[1]

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[1] G. Jackson ("Diaries," i, 270) gives a supposed instance of her interference in favour of Haugwitz.

[2] *Ibid.*, i, 301, 305, 314-9.

While Frederick William fumed at the Muscovite threats, came news of the violation of his Anspach domain on 3rd October. At once he declared his intention to avenge the insult and to expel Duroc from Prussian territory. He also raised high the hopes of the Allies by allowing the Russians to enter Silesia, and by favouring Pitt's plan of a joint expedition of the Allies to Hanover with a view to the liberation of Holland; and when he ordered the mobilization of the whole Prussian army, there appeared good grounds for expecting the speedy accession of at least 150,000 troops trained in the school of Frederick the Great. Even Haugwitz now suggested that if war came England must give Prussia a subsidy.[2] The Anglophil party at Berlin raised its head in triumph at the approach of the Russian Emperor; and when on 28th October he entered Berlin with enthusiastic greetings from the populace, Europe seemed about to be leagued against Napoleon. Chivalry and prudence alike counselled such a union, for on the morrow arrived news of the annihilation of Mack's army. Nothing but prompt action could save Germany from the Napoleonic deluge.

The first rumours of the disaster at Ulm did not reach London until 2nd November. Lord Malmesbury was dining with Pitt and mentioned the report to him, whereupon the Prime Minister exclaimed in loud and angry tones, "Don't believe a word of it: it is all a fiction."[3] But on the morrow a Dutch newspaper was brought, and Malmesbury translated the account, which was so clear and detailed as to leave little room for doubt. Pitt's countenance changed. There came over him that look which his friends saw imprinted more deeply with every week of deepening gloom. For a brief space it passed away. On 6th November London heard the joyful yet painful news of Trafalgar. It reached Downing Street at 3 a.m. Pitt was so moved by conflicting emotions that he, the soundest of sleepers, could not find repose, but roused himself for work. The Stock Exchange registered the swift oscillations from confidence to doubt, for though all fear of the French and Spanish fleet was at an end, yet, as Nelson perished, national security seemed imperilled, and Consols sank.

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[1] Metternich, "Mems.," i, 57 (Eng. ed.); Hardenberg, "Mems.," ii, 220-4.

[2] Hardenberg, "Mems.," ii, 292-300.

[3] "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 340.

The contrast between the victorious constancy of Britain and the wavering and hapless counsels of the Germanic States inspired Pitt with one of the most magnanimous utterances of that age. At the Lord Mayor's banquet on 9th November, that dignitary proposed his health as the Saviour of Europe. Pitt concentrated his reply into these two memorable sentences: "I return you many thanks for the honour you have done me; but Europe is not to be saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example." In its terseness and strength, its truth and modesty, its patriotism and hopefulness, this utterance stands unrivalled. The effect must have been all the greater because Pitt then bore on his countenance signs of that anxious forethought in which now lay the chief hope of European independence.

Six days before the arrival of news of the Austrian disaster, Pitt had sought to expedite a union with Prussia. In view of the urgency of the case, he decided to send his trusted friend, the Earl of Harrowby, the Dudley Ryder of former days. Harrowby's great abilities have never met with due recognition, probably owing to the persistent ill health which impaired alike his equanimity and his power of work; but Wilberforce had good cause for commending Pitt's choice; and he added in a letter of 25th October that the capacity of Harrowby was rated far higher by foreigners than by Englishmen.[1] The instructions to the Earl, drafted by Lord Mulgrave on 27th October, reveal Pitt's resolve to go very far in order to buy the support of Prussia. They empowered Harrowby to offer her the Belgic provinces and such German lands as would connect them with the Westphalian domains of Prussia. The need of money for the immediate equipment of her army being also urgent, Harrowby was to offer a yearly subsidy of £12 10*s.* for each Prussian soldier actually serving against France, the hope being expressed that from 150,000 to 200,000 men would be forthcoming. At the same time Pitt explained that at the general peace Great Britain would restore all her acquisitions oversea, Malta and the Cape of Good Hope alone excepted. Harrowby was also charged to do all in his power to effect the liberation of North Germany and Holland by the Russo-Swedish force then mustering at Stralsund. Such were the plans of Pitt. Even in this brief outline, their magnanimity is apparent. In order to assure the freedom of the Continent, he was ready to pour forth the wealth of Britain, and to sacrifice all her conquests, except those two bulwarks of Empire, Malta and the Cape.[1] Already even before Nelson gained the mastery of the seas at Trafalgar, Baird's force had set sail for the reduction of the Cape. It achieved its purpose in the month in which Pitt died. It is not generally known that the foundation of our South African Empire was due primarily to his foresight. The war having originated in Napoleon's aggressions and his threats respecting Egypt and the Orient generally, Pitt resolved that England should thenceforth dominate both the sea route and the overland route to the East Indies.

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[1] Pretyman MSS.; "Life of Wilberforce," iii, 412.

Unfortunately, owing to the fogs on the River Elbe and other delays at Hamburg, Harrowby did not reach Berlin until the middle of November;[2] and a fortnight earlier (3rd November) the sovereigns of Russia and Prussia had framed the Treaty of Potsdam. Ostensibly, it bound Prussia to side with the Allies unless within four weeks Napoleon accepted her armed mediation, which she proposed to offer forthwith. She required from the French Emperor a full recognition of the independence of Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and Naples, which of course implied the withdrawal of French troops from those lands. Napoleon was also to grant to the dispossessed King of Sardinia the following indemnities—Genoa, Parma, and Piacenza; while Austria was to recover Central Venetia as far as the River Mincio. The Allies flattered themselves that Napoleon would at once reject these terms and throw Prussia into their arms. Such, too, was the conviction of Pitt. While regretting that France should keep Piedmont and find no barrier opposed to her in Holland,[1] he felt so convinced of Napoleon's refusal and of Prussia's good faith that he prepared to satisfy her demand for a British subsidy. Prussian troops were marching into Hanover, as if with the aim of ousting the French and restoring the authority of George III; and Hardenberg assured Harrowby in their first interview, on 16th November, that that force would protect the flank of the Anglo-Russian expedition then about to enter the Electorate.

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[1] Rose, "Third Coalition," 208-20.

In "F. O.," Russia, 59, is a ciphered despatch of 25th October 1805 that, if circumstances favoured, a second British expedition (*i.e.*, besides that destined for Hanover) would be made ready to seize Walcheren.

[2] Pitt MSS., 142.

On the surface, then, everything seemed to augur a brilliant success for Pitt's policy. As had happened before, the recklessness of Napoleon favoured the British cause; and it is probable that, if Frederick William had sent to the French headquarters any one but Count Haugwitz, Prussia would have drawn the sword. Napoleon was in great danger. True, he met with little opposition in his advance to Vienna and thence into Moravia. But the deeper he plunged into that province, the worse would be his position if 180,000 Prussians were launched at his flank and rear. The Court of Berlin was well aware that the destinies of Europe lay in its hands; and for once a fatal confidence possessed Frederick William. He and his advisers used the crisis, not in the magnanimous spirit which impelled Pitt to sacrifice nearly the whole of Britain's naval conquests, but in order to assure Prussia's gain even at the expense of the solidarity of the European League. The Coalition's extremity was Prussia's opportunity. Hanover was her price for joining it. Such was the purport of a secret article of the Treaty of Potsdam, to which the Czar had most reluctantly given his consent.

In order to bring the utmost possible pressure to bear upon the British Government, a special Russian envoy, Count d'Oubril, set out from Berlin to London, crossing Harrowby on the way. Oubril arrived in London on or about 16th November; and after a short delay Vorontzoff and he communicated to Pitt the document containing the ominous demand. The Russian ambassador noted that Pitt, despite long training in the concealment of his feelings, displayed some emotion on reading the fateful words. In truth, they dealt the second of the strokes which struck him to the heart. But, collecting himself with an effort, he informed Vorontzoff that, so great was the King's attachment to Hanover, the patrimony of his family for upwards of a thousand years, that no Minister would venture ever to name the proposal, as it might either kill him or drive him mad. All the arguments of Vorontzoff and Oubril on behalf of the Prusso-Russian demand utterly failed. Pitt expressed a desire to meet Prussia's wishes for a better western frontier, but never at the expense of Hanover.[1] Thus he deliberately faced a terrible diplomatic reverse rather than expose the King to a recurrence of his mental malady. A little later he recovered his equanimity; for on 19th November he informed Harrowby that, though Hanover was out of the question, yet he hoped to find an equivalent which would satisfy Prussia. The two Emperors could not in their present plight object to her gaining a large accession of territory. Moreover it would be an infinite disgrace to them now to make a separate peace with Napoleon.

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[1] See Hansing, "Hardenberg und die dritte Coalition" (Appendix), for a comparison of these terms with those of the Anglo-Russian treaty of 11th April 1805.

> Still [he added] even if this should happen, we have a strong interest that a separate peace should provide all the security that can be obtained for the Continent. If decent terms are obtained, particularly if France is obliged *really* to evacuate Holland and leave it in a state of independence, and if the three great Continental Powers after extorting concessions from France in the moment of victory, unite cordially in an obligation to resist all future encroachments, not only Europe will have gained much, but we shall have gained for the separate objects of this country more than enough to compensate for all the expense of subsidies in this year; and we may return to a state of separate war with little to guard against but the single point of Boulogne and with increased means of concentrating both our naval and land defence. The first object therefore of my wishes is, the immediate rejection of the mediation[2] and the *embarking Prussia at any rate in active and decisive*

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[1] Czartoryski, "Mems.," ii, ch. ix. The editor wrongly gives the date of Vorontzoff's letter as $\frac{17}{29}$ September 1805, though it contains references to Ulm and Trafalgar. It is of 18th-21st November. "F. O.," Prussia, 70. Mulgrave to Harrowby, 23rd November.

[2] *I.e.*, the Prussian mediation by Napoleon.

> *operations* towards Germany and Holland, leaving it to be considered afterwards what territorial arrangements can be agreed upon to secure her permanent co-operation. The next would be, in the event of negotiation, our being included in it, on the terms of restoring all our conquests except Malta and the Cape—and the third (and tho' the worst not a bad one) as good a separate peace as possible for our perfidious Allies, leaving us to fight our battle for ourselves. . . .[1]

Pitt's indignation against Prussia did not lead him to fling a refusal at her. On the contrary, he sought to postpone that announcement until the expiration of the four weeks, within which she must make her decision to side with or against Napoleon. Such was the purport of his letter of 23rd November to Harrowby. He also announced an increase in the numbers of the British force destined to serve in Hanover. This expedition under General Don was now being pushed on with great zeal. It met with disapproval from Canning, who with much sagacity pointed out, on 29th November, that if the war were continued the gain of a month or two was a trifling object; whereas, if the Allies ended the war, France would certainly offer Hanover to Prussia.[2] The dash of pessimism in Canning's nature enabled him to discern difficulties and dangers which were hidden from Pitt's ever hopeful vision. Mulgrave seems to have shared Pitt's view; for he signed all the despatches relating to the Hanoverian expedition. On 23rd November he informed Harrowby that, early in the year 1806, as many as 70,000 British and Hanoverian troops would be ready for service, either in Hanover or wherever they could be employed to most effect. He therefore expected that by that time the Allies would have nearly 300,000 men in North Germany; and, as the resources of Austria were not depleted by the disaster at Ulm, she and Russia ought then to have nearly half a million of men on foot.[3]

Pitt's eagerness to receive news from Harrowby appears in the closing phrases of his letter of 29th November to that envoy: "We are counting moments till we hear in what state you found things on your arrival [at Berlin], and what has been Haugwitz's reception at the French headquarters." Again, on 5th December, he sent off to him a letter, which as being the last of any importance written by him at Downing Street, must be given in full:

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[1] Harrowby MSS.

[2] See "Pitt and Napoleon: Essays and Letters" for the letter in full.

[3] Rose, "Third Coalition," 230-5.

Downing St. *Dec.* 5*th*, 1805.

DEAR HARROWBY,

I am grieved to hear by your letter of the 24th that you had been so much persecuted by headaches, and that you had allowed the secret article of Potsdam [*sic*] to give you so much uneasiness. You must I am sure be satisfied that the way in which you have treated it is *the best possible*, because it gives no hopes of the thing being consented to, and at the same time avoids the necessity of any formal and official negative. The great object I think is that Prussia should if possible, decide on the result of C^t^ Haugwitz's mission, without giving to the evil councillors of the King of Prussia the advantage of stating to him that this object is precluded for ever. At the same time we cannot in good faith give the least assurance that it is likely to be ever attainable. Woronzow [Vorontzoff] who has been in town for ten days but is gone again, writes to Alopeus that he has received from him the *mémoire raisonné* on the exchange of Hanover, but cannot present it to us till he has orders to do so from his own Court. We are therefore supposed to know nothing more of the matter.

On the whole state of things, you will perhaps be angry with me for saying that my hopes are still sanguine. I think I see great chance of Prussia agreeing to co-operate either for a definite object or a limited time, in return for subsidies and for our assurance (which you know to be a very sincere one) of wishing to procure for them important acquisitions. The question of Hanover may I think be left aloof. As to plans of operations, it is almost idle to say anything. But you will have seen that we think the first and *essential* point is to act (as Prussia seems to intend) with a force sure of success in the rear of the French Army in Germany. Still I cannot conceive what can be the military reasons why an attack on Holland should not take place at the same time, or at least should not be prepared so as to be put into execution whenever the effect of any great success of the Allies, or a frost, or an appearance of good disposition in the country, should afford a favourable opening for such an enterprise, the advantages of which in its impression and consequences I need not state to you. We have finally decided with a view to this chance and for the sake of shewing at any rate our readiness to co-operate, to send the 12,000 men which have been prepared, to Embden [*sic*], and if this wind continues, I hope they will sail within three days. Endeavour to make Prussia send under General Kalkreuth (or whoever may be the general they destine for that quarter) not merely 10,000 men, but enough to make such an army as can scarce be resisted. Our force with the Russians (exclusive of the Swedes and after allowing for something to watch Hameln[1]) will be near 40,000 men. It surely cannot be difficult for Prussia to add 30,000 to that number within a very few weeks on increased subsidies beyond the number they now propose, and that without at all impairing the effort against Bonaparte's army. As to your stay at Berlin I can only say that if your health will permit, *everything that we value most* may depend on your remaining till you have seen the leading points of the negociation fairly through. As to details with Saxony and Hesse, they cannot be worth your waiting for, if they require any time, which, however, supposing you once to settle with Prussia, they cannot. The important moment seems to be that when the issue of Haugwitz's negociation shall have been known in Berlin and time given to communicate with Austria and Russia on the result. Under these circumstances it will I am afraid hardly be as pleasant to you as it is to me to know that Parliament will not meet till the 21st of Jany [1806] and that you have not on that account any reason for your immediate return. If, however, (as I most earnestly hope will not be the case) you should really find the fatigue and anxiety too much for you, it is certainly among *the things that we value most*, that you should return, having suffered as little as possible. A frigate will be sent to wait your orders at the Elbe, but I hope you will have no occasion to use it, till after you have signed a provisional treaty, and seen the Prussians on their march against the enemy.

Ever most sincerely yours
W. P.

Three days before Pitt poured forth this sanguine forecast, Napoleon struck the Coalition to the heart. As "the sun of Austerlitz" set, the two Emperors were in flight eastwards, while their armies streamed after them in hopeless rout, or struggled through the funnel of death between the two lakes (2nd December). Marbot's story of thousands of Russians sinking majestically under the ice is a piece of melodrama. But the reality was such as to stun the survivors. In his dazed condition the Emperor Francis forthwith sent proposals for a truce. It proved to be the precursor of the armistice of 6th December, which involved the departure of the Russian army and the exclusion of that of Prussia from Austrian territories. In the calculating balance maintained at Berlin, this diplomatic surrender proved to be a greater calamity than the military disaster. True, the news of the battle caused consternation; but for the present Frederick William held firm and on 8th December ordered part of the Prussian army (now 192,000 strong) to enter Bohemia for the succour of the Allies.[1] Not until after the 13th, after the arrival of news of the armistice, did he seek to evade his obligations to Russia; and, obviously, a new situation arose when Alexander gave up the campaign, and Francis promised to bar out the Prussians. Hardenberg sought to hide from Harrowby this change of front, hinting, however, that Prussia might have to consult her own interests. In the light of the events of 1795, that phrase was clear enough; and Harrowby forthwith sent orders to General Don to countermand the advance of his troops towards Hanover.[2]

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[1] The French held the fortress of Hameln.

To complete this chapter of misfortunes, Harrowby's health broke down. On discovering the truth about Prussia's secret demand for Hanover, he fell into the depths of despair and nervous prostration, as appears from the postscript of his letter of 24th November to Pitt:

> This horrible secret article has finished me. It stood with its mouth open, and from mere cowardice I have run into it, and it will devour me. I am persuaded, however, that it would equally have caught me if I had run away. There is something, however, in every view of it which agonises me. I am anxious beyond imagination to know what passes in England upon it and conclude I shall by the next newspaper. Would it be impossible to prevail upon the King to listen to the idea of a sort of Barrier-treaty for Hanover, which would give Prussia a military frontier but not the territorial possession?[3]

On 8th December, after hearing the first news of Austerlitz, he writes in equally dolorous strains, concluding with a request that Pitt would send a frigate to the mouth of the Elbe to bring away his coffin. Again he writes in these pathetic terms:

> *Most secret.*
>
> Berlin, 12 *Dec.* 1805.[4]
>
> DEAR PITT,
>
> The current of events has been so rapid, and the embarrassments they produce from every quarter is [*sic*] so intolerable, that, weakened as my brain has been by nervous spasms of giddiness, I hardly keep my senses. Cool judgment is required; and I can only take steps in a state of agitation—repent; and there is something more to be

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[1] Rose, "Third Coalition," 259.

[2] *Ibid.*, 260, 261.

[3] Pitt MSS., 142.

[4] Pretyman MSS.

repented of. I shall not long stand it; but, in the meantime, what mischief may not have happened! The sacrifice of myself is nothing. All is over with me even if I survive. I am tolerably at intervals, but every fresh occurrence brings with it distraction. I tremble at the consequences. You can conceive no state of mind, or rather of mind and body operating upon each other; you cannot even pity it; you can only despise it. Good God. If it be possible, do not betray me. I may recover. I try to disguise my feelings. I write to my wife with affected cheerfulness. She would not survive. For heaven's sake, keep this to yourself.

Yours ever,

HARROWBY.

To what mistake Harrowby here alludes is a mystery. But George Jackson states that he had three fits at Berlin, besides spasms every day. Indeed his state was so pitiable that his selection for this difficult post was matter of general comment. The physicians strongly urged him to return to England at once.[1] Pitt cannot have received Harrowby's pathetic confession when he replied as follows, probably to the letter of the 8th:

Bath, *Dec.* 21st, 1805.[2]

DEAR HARROWBY,

I was prevented from writing a few lines as I intended by the messenger we sent from hence yesterday. We are sending orders for another today to pass through Berlin on his way to the Emperor's head-quarters, to remind them of sending the ratification which we have never yet received. We have nothing very authentic from the armies later than your despatch of the 9th by estafette, but there are accounts thro' Hamburg from Berlin of the 10th, corroborated by reports from various quarters, which lead us to hope that the sequel of the battle at length terminated in great success on the part of Russia. If this proves true, I flatter myself your subsidiary treaty will have been soon brought to a prosperous issue, and you will be delivered from all your fatigue and anxiety. I am quite grieved to think how much you have suffered, tho' I trust your complaint is only temporary, and that a good battle and a good treaty will send you back to us in better health than you went. I see no danger of your exceeding our limit in the amount of subsidy, as we looked if necessary to an actual annual payment of £3,000,000, and the number proposed in the treaty, of 180,000

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[1] G. Jackson, "Diaries," i, 377, 381, 384. Harrowby left Berlin on 7th or 8th January 1806 (*ibid.*, 390).

[2] Harrowby MSS.

Prussians and 40,000 Allies, will not require more than £2,750,000, which still leaves room for 25,000 men more if they are wanted and can be had. I have been here for ten days and have already felt the effect of the waters in a pretty smart fit of the gout from which I am just recovering, and of which I expect soon to perceive the benefit.

Ever yours,

W. Pitt.

I need hardly tell you that every step you have taken has been exactly what we should have desired.

He who wrote these cheering words was in worse health than Harrowby. The latter lived on till the year 1847; Pitt had now taken his last journey but one. Sharp attacks of gout had reduced him to so weak and tremulous a state that he could scarcely lift a glass to his lips. So wrote Mrs. Jackson on 9th December, long before the news of Austerlitz reached these shores.[1] So far back as 27th November, Canning, in prophetic strains, begged him not to defer a projected visit to Bath until it was too late for the waters to do him good. But "the pilot that weathered the storm" refused to leave the tiller in case decisive news came from Harrowby. He also prepared to strengthen his Cabinet against the attacks certain to be made in the ensuing session, by including in it two excellent speakers, Canning and Charles Yorke, the latter taking the Board of Control. Why he did not complete these changes, as Canning begged him to do, is far from clear. Possibly the sharp though friendly criticism which Canning levelled against the Anglo-Russian expedition to Hanover made him apprehensive of divisions in the Cabinet on a question which was very near his heart. Certainly much could be said in favour of an expedition to Walcheren, which Canning urged should be entrusted to General M[oore?]. Pitt preferred the Hanoverian enterprise, doubtless because it would lay Russia and Prussia under a debt of honour to co-operate to the utmost of their power.

At last the strain became too great, and on 7th December Pitt set out for Bath, arriving there on the 11th. He resided at Harrowby's house, 11, Laura Place. His stay in Bath aroused interest so intense that he found it necessary to vary the time of his visits to the Pump Room in order to escape the crowd which would otherwise have incommoded him.[1] As has just appeared, he expected a speedy recovery; for, as was the case with his father, if the attack of gout ran a normal course, the system felt relief. Freedom from worry was the first condition of amendment. After his retirement from office in 1768 Chatham recovered so quickly that his opponents gibed at the illness as a political device.[2] Ten years later he succumbed to excitement and strain.

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[1] G. Jackson, "Diaries," i, 381.

During the first part of his stay at Bath, Pitt was in good spirits and wrote cheerfully about his health. The following letter to his London physician, Sir Walter Farquhar, is not that of a man who feels death approaching:

Bath, Dec. 15. 1805.[3]

The gout continues pretty smartly in my foot; and I find from Mr. Crooks that it is attended with a feverish pulse and some other symptoms of the same nature. I have communicated to Mr. Crooks your directions, and he is to send me the saline draughts with some little addition, which he will explain to you. I thought he would detail symptoms more precisely than I could, and have therefore desired him to write to you. On the whole, I have no doubt the plan you have laid down will answer, and I do not at present see the smallest occasion to accept your kind and friendly offer of coming here.

P.S. 4.30 P.M. I enclose Mr. Crooks' letter to you. His account to me of the pulse was that it was not strong, but quick and beating near an hundred. One of the saline draughts which I have taken since I wrote the foregoing letter, seems, as far as I can judge from feeling, already to have had a very good effect.

Not until ten days later do we find signs of alarm in the letters of his friends; for it is characteristic of his buoyant nature that he never wrote despondingly about himself. There is a well-known story to the effect that, on hearing the news of Austerlitz, he called for a map of Europe, to see where the place was, and then said with a sigh: "Roll up that map: it will not be wanted these ten years." One version assigns the incident to Shockerwick House, near Bath. Pitt is looking over the picture gallery, and is gazing at Gainsborough's portrait of the actor Quin. His retentive memory calls up the lines in Churchill's "Characters":

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[1] Peach, "Historic Houses of Bath." The "Bath Herald" of 11th January 1806 has an ode containing the lines:

Oh prepare, prepare
The renovating draught! He comes by stealth
(For so unconscious worth is ever seen)
With thoughts uplifted but retiring mien.

[2] Ruville, "Chatham," iii, 246.

[3] Chevening MSS.

> Nature, in spite of all his skill, crept in—
> Horatio, Dorax, Falstaff—still 'twas Quin.

At that moment he hears the beat of a horse's hoofs. A courier dashes up. He comes in, splashed with mud, hands the despatches. Pitt tears them open and hurriedly reads them. His countenance changes, he calls for brandy, then for a map, and is finally helped to his carriage, uttering the historic phrase.[1] In another version he mournfully rolls out the words to Lady Hester Stanhope, as she welcomes him in the hall of Bowling Green House, after his last journey to his home on Putney Heath.[2] The words probably fell from him on some occasion. But, at the risk of incurring the charge of pedantry, I must point out that the news of Austerlitz did not come on him as one overwhelming shock: it filtered through by degrees. As we have seen, he wrote to Harrowby on 21st December, stating that reports from Berlin and other quarters represented the sequel to the battle as a great success for the Russians. It appears that Thornton, our envoy at Hamburg, wrote as follows on 13th December to Mulgrave: "From everything I can learn (for the details are even yet far from being circumstantial and decisive) the tide of success had completely turned in favour of the Russian and Austrian armies, tho', as the conflict still continued to the 4th and perhaps to the 5th, it could not be positively said on which side the victory had been declared. The certain intelligence cannot now be long delayed."[3]

Castlereagh also, writing to Pitt on 19th December, assured him that he had heard similar news through various channels, and therefore cherished high hopes that something good had happened.[4] Mulgrave, who was then also at Bath along with Bathurst, Hawkesbury, and Canning, shared these hopes. Despite the first reports of Austerlitz, which were promptly contradicted, the Ministerial circle at Bath had no want of diversion. On 12th December Mulgrave sent to Pitt a short poem on Trafalgar for his correction, and Pitt touched up a few lines. On 21st December Mulgrave wrote to him: "I send you Woronzow [Vorontzoff] and Ward, *faute de mieux*. I was rejoiced to find you were gone out in your carriage when I called at your home after church. As Bathurst, Canning, and the gout have left you, I hope you will be able to return to the mess to-morrow." This does not imply that Pitt was living the life of an invalid, or was kept to so strict a diet as during his sojourn at Bath three years before.

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[1] Thomas Hardy ("The Dynasts," i, Act vi, sc. 7) places the incident in the week after Austerlitz. The date is impossible.

[2] Stanhope, iv, 369.

[3] Pitt MSS., 337.

[4] *Ibid.*, 121. See, too, in his letter of 23rd December ("Castlereagh Corresp.," vi. 92).

Equally hopeful was the estimate of Canning. He spent a week with Pitt at Bath, and, after leaving him shortly before Christmas, informed a friend that Pitt was "recovering from a fit of the gout, which has done him abundance of good, and puts off the time of his driving after old Frere—I trust to an incalculable distance. . . . There wants only an official confirmation of all the good news (that has reached us through every possible channel except those of Office) to complete it."[1]

Canning, we may note here, had discussed with Pitt his projected poem—"Ulm and Trafalgar" (which bore the motto "Look here, upon this picture, and on that"). It began:

> While Austria's yielded armies, vainly brave,
> Moved, in sad pomp, by Danube's blood-stained wave

and ended with a noble acclaim to Nelson:

> Thou, bravest, gentlest Spirit, fare thee well.

On the first line Canning plumed himself until he remembered the warning of an old tutor at Magdalen, that when anything in your verses pleased you very much, it was best to strike it out. Canning referred the phrase "yielded armies" to Pitt, who probably found relief from his cares in touching up the poem.[2] That Christmastide, then, was a time of anxiety, but not of settled gloom. There is no sign that Pitt or his colleagues felt the position to be desperate until the end of the year. On

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[1] J. Bagot, "Canning and his Friends," i, 227. The statement about the gout corrects Malmesbury ("Diaries," iv, 343) that the attack of gout left Pitt far weaker and with digestion impaired. Malmesbury was not at Bath. Frere's father had lately died.

[2] Bagot, "Canning, etc.," 415-9; H. Newbolt, "Year of Trafalgar," 190-3.

Christmas Day Castlereagh wrote from Downing Street to Pitt: "I am sorry to add to your materials for criticism and speculation. I send you Cooke's 'Courant.' There is intelligence in the City from Amsterdam of the 21st. Nothing official known here of an *armistice.* You have received from Lord B[arham?] every information from that quarter."[1]

Indeed, the hopefulness of Ministers now involved them in greater difficulties. Building on Prussia's promises, they decided early in December to order the despatch of strong reinforcements to the British corps then on the point of entering Hanover.[2] In all, as many as 65,000 British and King's Germans were to be sent—the largest force that had ever set sail from these shores, a fact which testifies to the ardour of Pitt's desires for the liberation of Hanover and Holland. Even the immediate results of this decision were disastrous. Sixty-seven transports, forthwith setting sail, encountered a terrible storm, which flung three of them on the enemy's coast, while one sank with all hands on the Goodwins. Such was the purport of the news sent by Castlereagh to Pitt at Bath on 19th December. He added that, in spite of these losses, "the little Cabinet of five" (with Lord Barham in attendance) decided to order all the remaining transports to sail, so that Prussia might be encouraged to "throw her strength to the southward. We have acted for the best, and I hope you and your companions will approve."[3] Pitt, of course, did approve, not knowing that while England was encountering heavy risks in order to effect the liberation of North Germany, her Allies had come to terms with Napoleon.

At last, on 29th December, definite news concerning the armistice of 4th December reached London. It must have chilled the hearts of the boldest. For, trusting in the continued exertions of the Allies, England had sent to North Germany as many as 257 transports, and of these 8 were now known to be lost, involving the death of 664 men, and the capture of about 1,000 on the enemies' coasts. All this effort and loss of life now appeared to be useless, in view of the vacillating conduct of Prussia. Only with her good will could the British troops, with the Russian and Swedish contingents, hope to conquer Holland. If she declared against us, the whole force would be in jeopardy. Such were the tidings which Castlereagh bore with

[1] Pitt MSS., 121.

[2] "Castlereagh Corresp.," vi, 70-85.

[3] Pitt MSS., 121.

him to Pitt at the end of the year.[1] Not a line survives respecting that mournful interview; but we can picture the deathly look coming over Pitt's emaciated features as he now for the first time faced the prospect of the dissolution of the mighty league which he had toiled to construct. Probably it was this shock to the system which brought on a second attack of the gout, accompanied with great weakness and distaste for food.[2]

Nevertheless he clung to the hope that Prussia would stand firm. On 3rd January 1806 further news reached him from the Austrian and Prussian Governments. The Austrian despatches represented Austerlitz as a repulse, but not a disaster, and the armistice as a device for enabling Prussia to prepare her blow at Napoleon's flank or rear. On 5th January Mulgrave found in the despatches from Berlin grounds for believing that that Court might under certain conditions assist the two Emperors in Moravia and the British force in Hanover. On the morrow he wrote to Pitt in emphatic terms, urging him to offer to Prussia the Dutch Republic. That little State (he urged) could not again be independent, save in circumstances now scarcely imaginable, much less realizable. Further, the Stadholder having very tamely accepted the domain of Fulda as an indemnity, we need feel no qualms for the House of Nassau; and, as Prussia was influenced solely by territorial greed, and Hanover was out of the question, she might well acquire the Dutch Netherlands, which would link her to British interests.[3] Again we have to admit ignorance of Pitt's opinion on this degrading proposal. Certainly it never took definite shape.[4] Though willing to assign to Prussia the Belgic Netherlands, he laid great stress on the independence of the Dutch Netherlands, which indeed was the corner-stone of his foreign policy. Moreover, to barter away an unoffending little State was to repeat the international crimes of the partitions of Poland and Venetia. We may be sure that that proud and just spirit would rather have perished than stoop to such ignominy.

[1] "Castlereagh Corresp.," vi, 100; "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 344.

[2] Gifford, "Life of Pitt," vi, 802; Lord Rosebery, "Tomline's Estimate of Pitt" (1903), p. 16.

[3] Pitt MSS., 142.

[4] In the "Hardenberg Memoirs" (ii, 353) it is stated that Harrowby offered Holland to Prussia. Every despatch that I have read runs counter to this assertion. If Harrowby made the offer, it was in sheer desperation and on his own authority; but he nowhere mentions it.

In effect, he fell a victim to his resolve never to barter away the patrimony of George III. We now know that Prussia's policy at this crisis turned mainly on the acquisition of Hanover. Her envoy, Haugwitz, whom she sent to Napoleon's headquarters charged with the offer of Prussia's armed mediation on behalf of Europe, had on 15th December signed with him the humiliating Convention of Schönbrunn, whereby Prussia agreed to make certain cessions of territory on condition of acquiring Hanover. About Christmastide Frederick William decided to close with this offer, which involved the expulsion of the Anglo-Russian force from the Electorate. Premonitory signs of this change of front were soon visible at Berlin. Indeed, the trend of Prussian policy during the last decade prepared the British Ministry for the ruin of their hopes. Pitt must have been racked with anxiety lest Prussia should doff the lion's skin and don that of the jackal; for he alone knew of the nervous breakdown of Harrowby.

Perhaps it was the hope of helping on that negotiation from Downing Street, added to the verdict of Sir Walter Farquhar that the Bath waters were now of no avail, which induced him on 9th January to set out on his homeward journey. He was believed to be in better health than at the time of his arrival; such at least was the announcement of the "Bath Herald" on the 11th; and his hopeful outlook appears in a curious detail which afterwards came to light. In order to beguile the tedium of the journey he had taken out from a circulating library in Bath the following works, each in two volumes, "The Secret History of the Court of Petersburg," and Schiller's "History of the Thirty Years' War."[1] A man who believes death to be near does not undertake a study of the manifold intrigues of Catharine II, or of the Thirty Years' War. He also had the prospect of seeing the liveliest and most devoted of friends, Canning, at his country home, South Hill, Bracknell, in Windsor Forest. Canning sent the invitation on the 5th, and it was accepted on the 8th in terms which implied a sojourn of some days. He offered to accompany him from Bath, if he felt strong enough to converse on the way; but Pitt declined this offer, and it is doubtful whether he stayed at South Hill; for Malmesbury declares that he had to remain a long time in bed at Reading. On the other hand the Bishop of Lincoln declared that the journey took only two days, and that at its close Pitt showed no very marked signs of fatigue. Lady Hester Stanhope, however, was shocked by his wasted appearance on reaching his home, Bowling Green House, on Putney Heath.

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[1] Chevening MSS.; "Notes and Queries," 12th November 1864. Mr. John Upham of Bath on 10th March 1806 sent these particulars to Lord Chatham. Gifford ("Life of Pitt," vi, 803) wrongly states that the journey took four days.

Some eighteen months earlier he had leased that residence. It stands on the (old) Portsmouth Road, and had earlier been an inn frequented by lovers of that game and patrons of cock-fighting. After enlargement it had been converted into a gentleman's abode which well suited the modest requirements of Pitt and of his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope.[1] There, not far from the scenes of his youthful frolics with Wilberforce, and only a quarter of a mile from the dell where he fought the duel with Tierney, he found solace from the ever-increasing cares of state. In those last months Hester felt for him feelings akin to adoration.

On the morrow, Sunday, their circle was enlarged by the arrival of his old friend and counsellor, Bishop Tomline, who was shocked at the change which had taken place in him since he left for Bath. The physicians, Farquhar, Reynolds, and Baillie, however, saw no cause for alarm, the only disquieting symptoms being intense weakness and dislike of animal food. There is a forcibly significant phrase in a recent letter of George Rose to Tomline, that he dreaded the effect on the invalid of an excessive use of medicines.[2] Evidently Rose believed the digestive organs to be impaired by this habit. Pitt's daily potations of port wine for many years past must further have told against recovery. Whether Farquhar and his colleagues cut off medicine and sought to build up that emaciated frame is uncertain. All that we know is that they prescribed complete quiet, and therefore requested the bishop to open all Pitt's letters so as to preclude all chance of excitement.

On 12th January, Pitt wrote an affectionate letter to the Marquis Wellesley, welcoming him on his return from his memorable Vice-royalty in India. He begged him to come to Bowling

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[1] The house has been very little altered since 1806, and not at all on the side shown in the accompanying sketch, which, by kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. Doulton, was done by my daughter. The room over the veranda is that in which Pitt died.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

Green House at the earliest opportunity. The letter closes with these remarkable words: "I am recovering rather slowly from a series of stomach complaints, followed by severe attacks of gout, but I believe I am now in the way of real amendment."[1] The Bishop also describes him as gaining ground until Monday the 13th. On that day he went out in his coach in the morning, but in the evening Lords Castlereagh and Hawkesbury, having obtained permission from the physicians to interview their chief, communicated news which had a most agitating effect. Pitt afterwards assured the Bishop "that he felt during that conversation some sensation in his stomach which he feared it might be difficult to remove."[2] It is surprising that the physicians allowed an interview of an agitating nature; but the ministerial pressure brought to bear on them may have overborne their better judgement. In matters of Cabinet discipline Pitt was an autocrat, insisting that no important action should be taken without his cognizance. Probably, then, it was his own sense of responsibility which exposed him to the death blow.

Certainly the question at issue was of the gravest kind. Should Ministers order the return of the British reinforcements last sent to Hanover? That expedition was the work of Pitt. He it was who had reared the fabric of a European Coalition; and, even after the withdrawal of Austria, he clung to the hope that Prussia would take her place, and, with the help of British, Prussian, Russian, and Swedish troops, drive the French from North Germany and the Dutch Republic. How could his colleagues order back a large part of the British force, thereby justifying the vacillations of Prussia and ensuring a parliamentary triumph to Fox and Grenville? And yet Ministers knew, better than Pitt could know, the danger of relying on the Court of Berlin. Though not yet fully aware of its resolve to take Napoleon's side, they had strong reasons for expecting this course of action; and in that case the British expedition would be in grave danger between the Prussians on the east, the Franco-Dutch forces on the south-west and the ice-floes which were forming on the River Weser. Prudence counselled the timely return of our troops who were yet on board ship at or near Bremen.[3] Patriotic pride prompted a bold offensive. But the King and Pitt alone could utter the decisive words. The King approved the return of the last reinforcements, and Pitt, it seems, must have conceded the point. But the concession struck him to the heart. It was the last of the deadly stabs which fate dealt him thick and fast in his time of weakness.

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[1] Stanhope, iv, 374.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

[3] "Castlereagh Corresp." vi, 103-112, 119.

Nevertheless, on the morrow he drove out in his carriage, but was visibly weaker than before the interview. For a few minutes he saw his brother and then Lord Wellesley. The latter found his mind as clear as ever; and he uttered these remarkable words about Sir Arthur Wellesley: "He states every difficulty before he undertakes any service, but none after he has undertaken it." What a prophecy of Vittoria and Waterloo there is in these words—the swan-song of Pitt. It was too much for him. He fainted before Wellesley left the room. On the 18th he rallied for a time, and the doctors saw a gleam of hope.[1]

In reality there was only one faint chance of recovery, that good news might arrive. The chief cause of physical collapse was the torture of the brain; and it was possible that the whole system might even now rally under the vitalizing thrills of hope. But as day by day passed by and brought nearer that dreaded occasion, the opening of Parliament on 22nd January, this last chance vanished. The news which reached the Foreign Office became more and more gloomy. On 10th January Mulgrave decided, when recalling Harrowby, to entrust his mission at Berlin to the Earl of Harrington, in the hope that that Court would keep troth.[2] But all negotiation was useless. By the 19th the conduct of Prussia respecting Hanover appeared so threatening that Ministers ordered the immediate recall of the whole British force.[3] Thus, England had sent forth some 60,000 troops in order to bring them back again. She had paid a million sterling to Austria, and the results were Ulm and Austerlitz. Nearly as much had gone to Russia, and the outcome was the armistice. A British subsidy had been claimed by Prussia, and in return she was about to take Hanover as a gift from Napoleon. It is to be hoped that Ministers kept the last bitter truth from Pitt; but from their silence he must have augured the worst. Surely death itself was better than to be driven from power by the combined attacks of Fox, Grenville, and Windham, the success of which was now assured.

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[1] Stanhope, iv, 375; "Malmesbury Diaries," iv, 346; "Dropmore P.," vii, 327.

[2] "F. O.," Austria, 77. Mulgrave to Harrington, 10th January 1806.

[3] "Castlereagh Corresp.," vi, 126.

A touching instance of Pitt's thoughtfulness during these days of waning strength is recorded by Robert Plumer Ward. He had accepted office as Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs; but, in the event of the overthrow of the Ministry, he would be in a far worse position than before. Pitt remembered this fact, and whispered to Farquhar the words "Robert Ward." He also made signs for paper and ink and sought to pen a request for a pension; but he succeeded only in tracing strokes which could not be deciphered.[1] His thoughts were also with his nieces, especially Lady Hester Stanhope. Farquhar sought to prevent a parting interview with her; but during his temporary absence she slipped into the bedroom, there to receive the blessing of her uncle and an affectionate farewell. To her brother James, who then came in, he said; "Dear soul, I know she loves me. Where is Hester? Is Hester gone?" Early on the 22nd he dictated these words to the bishop: "I wish £1,000 or £1,500 a year to be given to my nieces if the public should think my long services deserving it; but I do not presume to think I have earned it."[2] He then named those to whom since 1801 he owed sums of money: Long, Steele, Lords Camden and Carrington, the Bishop of Lincoln and Joseph Smith; he also entrusted his papers to the bishop and to Lord Chatham.

Already Bishop Tomline had warned him of his approaching change and besought him to prepare his mind for the Sacrament. This he declined, alleging his unworthiness to receive it. Thereupon the bishop prayed with him. He calmly murmured the responses and humbly confessed that he had too much neglected prayer. Nevertheless, he affirmed the steadiness of his religious faith and principles, and declared that he had ever sought to fulfil his duty to God and to mankind, though with many errors and failures. While the bishop was overcome with emotion, the dying man thanked him earnestly for all his kindness throughout life. Once his thoughts recurred to his own conduct; he expressed heartfelt satisfaction at the innocency of his life, and declared that he died in perfect charity with all mankind.[3]

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[1] R. P. Ward, "Memoirs," i, 176.

[2] Pretyman MSS.

[3] Lord Rosebery, "Tomline's Estimate of Pitt," 18; "Dropmore P.," vii, 330.

He lingered on to the early hours of 23rd January, the twenty-fifth anniversary of his entry into Parliament. During that night the cares of state once more pressed upon him. He spoke often about a private letter from Lord Harrowby, probably the pathetic effusion quoted above. At times he asked his nephew the direction of the wind, and on hearing it was in the east he murmured: "East—ah that will do: that will bring him quick."[1] Then he fell into conversation with a messenger, or, again, he murmured "Hear, hear," until sleep enfolded him. The last thoughts of Napoleon are said to have centred in his early love and his army—"Joséphine:—Tête d'armée" he gasped as he neared his end. In Pitt's being there was but one dominant passion; and to it his wandering fancies returned during a last brief spell of consciousness. As James Stanhope listened to the breathing, there fell on his ears with a strange clearness the words: "My country! How I leave my country!" Then the sufferer fell once more into a deep sleep; and so he lay, until, some three hours before the dawn, his spirit passed away in a long-drawn sigh.

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[1] Stanhope, iv, 381.

EPILOGUE

Now is the stately column broke
The beacon-light is quench'd in smoke,
The trumpet's silver sound is still
The warder silent on the hill.
SCOTT, *Marmion.*

THIS noble epitaph to the memory of Pitt conveys an impression alike of heroic endeavour and of irretrievable failure. It is the Funeral March of Chopin, not of Handel, and it echoes the feeling of the time. An impenetrable darkness hung over England. Ulm, Austerlitz, the armistice, and the desertion of the Allies by Prussia were successive waves of calamity, which obliterated all landmarks and all means of safety. The dying words of Pitt found response in every breast, with this difference, that, while he was proudly conscious of the correctness of his aims, the many, who judge solely by tangible results, imputed to him the disasters of the war and the collapse of the Coalition. Even Auckland exclaimed that the continental alliances had been wretchedly mismanaged, a remark which Malmesbury treated with quiet contempt. Grenville, who was about to move a vote of censure on the Ministry, burst into an agony of tears on hearing that Pitt was at death's door. His distress of mind probably arose from a belated perception of the factiousness of his own conduct and from grief at the unrelieved gloom of the end of a career whose meridian splendour had shed lustre upon him.

The House of Commons did not whole-heartedly accord to the deceased statesman a burial in Westminster Abbey in the tomb of Chatham. A motion to that effect, moved by Lascelles and seconded by the Marquis of Titchfield, was strongly opposed by Fox, George Ponsonby, Windham, and three other speakers. It passed by 258 votes to 59. Still more painful was the discussion in the Common Council of the City of London, where a proposal to erect a monument to Pitt was carried only by 77 votes to 71. It is safe to say that, if the fortune of war had gone against France at Ulm and Austerlitz, Pitt would have been ecstatically hailed as the saviour of Europe, as indeed he was at the Guildhall after Trafalgar. How long was it before it dawned on Auckland, Windham, and the seventy-one councillors of the City of London, that the censures cast on the memory of Pitt ought to have been levelled at the defender of Ulm, the Czar Alexander and his equally presumptuous advisers at Austerlitz, and most of all at the cringing politicians of Berlin?

It is now abundantly clear that Pitt fell a victim to his confidence in the rulers of three great monarchies, whose means were vast, whose promises were lofty, and whose surrender after the first reverses baffled all forecasts. The descendants of Maria Theresa and Catharine tamely retired from the fray after a single adverse blow; and the successor of the great Frederick sheathed his sword after the unpardonable insult at Anspach.

In truth, the career of Pitt came to a climax at a time of unexampled decadence of the ancient dynasties. The destinies of the allied Houses of Bourbon rested upon Louis XVI of France and Charles IV of Spain. To the ineptitude of the former the French Revolution was in large measure due. To the weakness and falsity of the latter we may ascribe the desertion of the royalist cause by Spain in 1795-6, with the train of disastrous results in the Mediterranean and the West Indies. In Central Europe Francis of Austria was scarcely more than a tool in the hands of those subtle schemers, Thugut and Cobenzl. The boundless resources of Russia were at the disposal of Paul and Alexander, who, with all their generous impulses, were incapable of steadily applying them to one definite end. Only after weary years of subservience to Napoleon did Alexander develop that firmness of character which finally brought salvation to the Continent. From Frederick William even deeper humiliations failed to evoke any heroic resolve. Among the statesmen of those three monarchies at the time of Pitt there is but one who was a fit compeer to him; and the fates willed that Stein should not control affairs until the year 1807. The age of Pitt was the age of Godoy, Thugut, and Haugwitz — weavers of old-world schemes of partition or barter, and blind to the storm gathering in the West.

The importance of his achievements in curbing their ambitions and saving the smaller States has not received due recognition. He did much to rescue the Dutch Netherlands from anarchy, and Sweden and Turkey from the clutches of powerful neighbours. He failed, indeed, in his diplomatic contest with Catharine; but the duplicity of the Court of Berlin, and the factious opposition of the Whigs, made success impossible; and he had thereafter to look on helplessly at the final Partitions of Poland. Only those who have probed the policy of Russia, Austria, and Prussia in the years 1787-92 can fully realize the difficulties which attended his efforts to frame a solid league against Revolutionary France. As well might one attempt out of rubble to build a cannon-proof rampart.

At home Pitt had to deal with George III. Now, even under a limited monarchy the fortunes of a statesman depend largely on the character of his Sovereign. While possessing the initiative which proffers timely advice, it should be under the control of unfailing tact. Dowered with insight into character and foresight as to the trend of events, the Monarch must, for the most part, subordinate energy to self-repression and the prophetic instinct to the warnings of courtly sagacity. Yet the ideal British ruler must at times assert his will, albeit indirectly, and with the personal charm which ensures the smooth working of this delicately poised machine. He should therefore be the embodiment of all the political virtues. Will even the admirers of George claim that he realized that ideal? However excellent as Elector of Hanover, he was a doubtful blessing as King of Great Britain and Ireland.

In truth, the Hanoverian strain in his nature had not been toned to the degree of fineness needful for the kingly office in these islands. In a time of peculiar difficulty he sought to govern almost absolutely by means which ensured the temporary subservience of Parliament, and in a spirit which brought disruption upon the Empire. The former half of Pitt's career was largely occupied in repairing the financial waste consequent on the American War, or in making good long arrears of legislation. Here, indeed, is his most abiding contribution to the national welfare. But his indebtedness to the King on questions of foreign and domestic policy is seldom apparent. Reform, whether Economical or Parliamentary, encountered the more or less declared opposition of the Sovereign. On the other hand, George showed marked ability in the support of corporate interests and the management of men; so that his relations to Pitt were not unlike those of the Duke of Newcastle to Chatham. The Pitts supplied the brain power while the Monarch or the Duke by the award of favours ensured the needful degree of subservience at the polls or in the lobbies of St. Stephens.

After the "surrender" at the close of the American War, the attitude of George towards his British subjects was one of scarcely concealed scorn. Now and again his feelings burst forth uncontrollably. Shortly before his second attack of lunacy, which occurred near the end of the fortieth year of his reign, he astonished the congregation in church by repeating in loud and emphatic tones the response: "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation and said: 'It is a people that do err in their hearts, for they have not known My ways.'" The tones of the voice betokened the approach of lunacy, but the conviction of the mind was always the same. For the most part, however, scorn was tempered by calculation. His letters to Pitt are full of commendation of the House of Commons when it unquestioningly passed Government Bills or the Supplies; whereas he looked on Fox and Burke as baneful and wearisome talkers, consumers of time, and foes to healthful slumber. Similarly, in his political catechism, the whole duty of Parliament was to help Ministers to govern; while their proper function was to raise the maximum of revenue with the minimum of fuss and change. In short, to maintain the existing social order; to allow no change in a constitution which aroused the wonder or envy of other nations; to use peerages and bishoprics, pocket boroughs and sinecures, as a means of buttressing that fabric, such were the aims of the third George.

Failing materially to weaken the force of this mighty engine of patronage, Pitt was fain to make the best of things as they were. The defeat of his Reform Bill in 1785 was the chief crisis in his early career; for it involved the failure of the Abolition Bill, perhaps also of the schemes for the relief of the poor which he outlined in 1797. In fact, after the year 1785, and still more so after 1790, he had to govern mainly as King's Minister, not as the people's Minister. Worst of all, the centre of political gravity remained dangerously high throughout the storms of the Revolutionary Era. How much of the nation's energy then went forth in justifiable discontent and futile efforts at repression has already appeared. Up to the year 1798 the struggle against France was largely one of the governing class against a nation; and for this the King and the British oligarchy, not Pitt, were responsible. Personal charm and the magnetic gift of evoking enthusiasm have in some monarchs counterbalanced defects of narrowness and intolerance. George was not deficient in courtly grace and tact—witness his remark to Pitt at their first interview after the long separation of the years 1801-1804. When Pitt ventured to compliment the King on his looking better than after the illness of 1801, the latter at once replied: "That is not to be wondered at: I was then on the point of parting with an old friend. Now I am about to regain one." But these gracious remarks came rarely in his closing years, which were marked by increasing harshness to his family, petulance on the most trivial affairs, and an outlook more narrowly personal than ever.

Such a nature chafes its surroundings. It arouses no enthusiasm; it merely begets heat by friction. Pitt has been blamed for spending too much time and energy in speeches about the war. But there was no other way of kindling the nation's zeal. The Princes very rarely spoke in the House of Lords, except under an overmastering fear of the abolition of the Slave Trade. None of the Ministers, except Windham, had the gift of oratory. On Pitt alone devolved the task of arousing a national spirit; and a cruel destiny cut short his life at the very time when his inspiring presence was most needed. How much England then lost can never be known. Vorontzoff, Russian ambassador at London, who had earlier been a bitter enemy of Pitt, now expressed the fervent desire that death had carried off his weary old frame, rather than that of the potential Saviour of Europe. The words are instinct with prescience. The personality and the actions of Pitt were alike a summons to a life of dignity and manly independence. His successors had perforce to take a course not unlike that which they were about to censure in him; and the distrust which the Czar Alexander felt for them in part accounts for the collapse at Tilsit and the ensuing years of bondage to Napoleon.

The disintegrating effects of the party system, or rather of its factious use by the Whig leaders, have been explained in these pages. Its first result was seen in the divergence of the careers of Pitt and Fox. The cause of Reform ought to have received their undivided support; but little by little they were edged apart, and their hostility was perhaps the most lasting of the many evils wrought by the unnatural Coalition of Fox and North. For a time Pitt gathered around him a national party, which became avowedly so on the junction of the Old Whigs in 1794. But in the last years of his life the denuding influences of partisan and personal feuds disastrously thinned his following. From the refusal of George to grant Catholic Emancipation, and the consequent resignation of Pitt in the spring of 1801, we may trace three sinister results. The Union with Ireland was bereft of its natural sequel, Catholic Emancipation; the Ministerial ranks were cleft in twain; and the crisis brought to the front Addington, a man utterly incapable of confronting Napoleon. Had Pitt remained in power, the Peace of Amiens would have been less one-sided, its maintenance more dignified; and the First Consul, who respected the strong but bullied the weak, would probably have acquiesced in a settlement consonant with the reviving prestige of England. But though the Union Jack won notable triumphs in the spring of 1801, yet at London everything went awry. Moved by consideration for the King, then recovering from lunacy, Pitt weakly promised not to bring forward Catholic Emancipation during his life, an act which annoyed the Grenville-Windham group. His rash promise to support Addington tied his hands in the following years; and even after the renewal of war he too scrupulously refrained from overthrowing a Ministry whose weakness had invited foreign aggressions and was powerless to avenge them. Finally, the Grenvilles joined Fox; and thus the King's perversity nullified the efforts of Pitt to form an Administration worthy to cope with Napoleon.

Nevertheless, the challenge flung down to England by the French regicides in 1793 was such as to enhance the person of the Monarch in these islands; and the Revolutionary War, which was fatal to several dynasties on the Continent, served to consolidate the power of the House of Brunswick. For, though Pitt sought to keep the war from becoming a royalist crusade, it almost inevitably assumed that character. During hostilities there can be but two sharply defined parties. Accordingly, Pitt, who opened his career with a bold attack upon the prerogatives of George III, ended it as his champion, even consenting to surrender a cherished conviction in order that the Monarch's peace of mind might not be troubled. Was ever a Minister beset by more baffling problems, by more hampering restrictions? Peace might have solved and shattered them.

But peace he could not secure in the years 1796, 1797; and when finally it came it proved to be no peace, merely a pause before a still greater cycle of war.

The grandeur of Pitt's efforts for ensuring the independence of Europe has somewhat obscured his services as Empire builder. Yet, with the possible exception of Chatham, no statesman has exercised a greater influence on the destinies of the British race. On two occasions he sternly set his face against the cession of Gibraltar; he took keen interest in the settlement of New South Wales; his arrangements for the government of Canada deserve far higher praise than they have usually secured; and his firmness in repelling the archaic claims of Spain to the shores of the Northern Pacific gained for his people the future colony of British Columbia. Cherishing a belief in the pacific nature of Bonaparte's policy at the time of the Treaty of Amiens, he condoned the retrocession of the Cape of Good Hope and of Malta, on condition of the gain of Ceylon and Trinidad; but after the revival of French schemes of aggression in the East he saw the imperative need of planting or maintaining the Union Jack at those commanding points. He, who has been accused of excessive trust in allies, prepared to forego the alliance of Russia rather than give up Malta; and, even before Nelson gained the mastery at sea, Pitt sent forth an expedition to conquer the Cape. In his magnanimous desire of securing to Europe the blessings of a lasting peace he was ready to surrender maritime conquests of greater pecuniary value so long as England held the keys of the overland and sea routes to India. To that empire his just and statesmanlike policy brought a new sense of confidence and therefore a time of comparative rest, until the threatening orientation of Bonaparte's plans once more placed everything at hazard. Thanks to the exertions of Dundas and the Wellesleys, the crisis was averted; but the policy which assured British supremacy in the East was essentially that of Pitt.

It is far easier to assess the importance of the life work of Pitt than to set forth his character in living traits. Those who knew him well agree as the charm of his personality; but they supply few illuminating details, perhaps out of respect for the reserve which was his usual panoply. Like Chatham he rarely revealed his inmost self. The beauties of his conversation, informed with learning, sparkling with wit, always vivacious yet never spiteful, never appeared in their full glow except in the circle of his dearest friends; but by singular ill fortune they who could have handed on those treasures, were satisfied with entries such as: "Pitt talked a great deal among his friends"; or, "In society he was remarkably cheerful and pleasant, full of wit and playfulness";[1] or again, "His great delight was society. There he shone with a degree of calm and steady lustre which often astonished me more than his most splendid efforts in Parliament; . . . he seemed utterly unconscious of his own superiority and much more disposed to listen than to talk; . . . his appearance dispelled all care, his brow was never clouded even in the severest public trials."[2] These are only the *hors d'œuvres* of what must have been a feast of delight; but even they suffice to refute the Whig slanders as to Pitt's austerity and selfishness. Under happier auspices he would have been known as the most lovable of English statesmen; and his exceptional fondness for children would alone suffice to expose the falsity of his alleged reply to a manufacturer who complained that he could not get enough men—"Then you must take the children."[3] Cynicism at the expense of the weak was a trait utterly alien to him. It is also incorrect to assert, with Macaulay, that "pride pervaded the whole man, was written in the harsh rigid lines of his face, was marked by the way in which he walked, in which he sat, in which he stood, and, above all, in which he bowed." The Whig historian, here following the Whig tradition, formed his estimate of the whole man from what was merely a parliamentary mannerism. Pitt, as we have seen, was a prey to shyness and *gaucherie*; and the rigid attitude which he adopted for the House was not so much the outcome of a sense of superiority (though he had an able man's consciousness of worth) as a screen to hide those defects. A curiously stilted manner has been the bane of many gifted orators and actors; but the real test is whether they could throw it off in private. That Pitt threw it off in the circle of his friends they all agree. The only defects which Wilberforce saw in him were an inadequate knowledge of human nature, a too sanguine estimate of men and of the course of events, and, in later years, occasional displays of petulance in face of opposition.[1] The first are the defects of a noble nature, the last, those of a man whose strength has long been overtaxed.

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[1] "Life of Wilberforce," v, 260; "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 68.

[2] Marquis Wellesley, "Quarterly Rev." (1836).

[3] Michelet, "La Femme," Introd., ch. ii, quoted by Stanhope, iv, 405.

In fact, Pitt's constitution was unequal to the prolonged strain. In childhood his astonishingly precocious powers needed judicious repression. Instead, they were unduly forced by the paternal pride of Chatham. At Cambridge, at Lincoln's Inn, and in Parliament the intellectual pressure was maintained, with the result that his weakly frame was constantly overwrought and attenuated by a too active mind. Further, the pressure at Westminster was so continuous as to preclude all chance of widening his nature by foreign travel. He caught but a glimpse of the life of France in 1783; and his knowledge of other peoples and politics was therefore perforce derived from books. It is therefore surprising that the young Prime Minister displayed the sagacity and tolerance which marked his career.

But his faculties, though not transcendently great, were singularly well balanced, besides being controlled by an indomitable will and tact that rarely was at fault. In oratory he did not equal Sheridan in wit and brilliance, Burke in richness of thought and majesty of diction, or Fox in massive strength and debating facility; but, while falling little short of Fox in debate, he excelled him in elegance and conciseness, Burke in point and common sense, Sheridan in dignity and argumentative power, and all of them in the felicitous wedding of elevated thought or vigorous argument to noble diction. By the side of his serried yet persuasive periods the efforts of Fox seemed ragged, those of Burke philosophic essays, those of Sheridan rhetorical tinsel. And this harmony was not the effect of long and painful training. His maiden speech of 26th February 1781 displayed the grace and forcefulness which marked his classic utterance at the Lord Mayor's banquet ten weeks before his death.

Precocious maturity also characterized his financial plans, which displayed alike the shrewd common sense of those of Walpole and the wider aims of Adam Smith. Before his twenty-sixth year Pitt laid the basis of a system which, whatever its defects, ensured the speedy recovery of national credit and belied the spiteful croakings of foreign rivals. Four days after his death, Fox freely admitted that the establishment of the

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[1] "Private Papers of Wilberforce," 67-72.

Sinking Fund had been most beneficial; and this belief, though we now see it to be ill-founded, certainly endowed the nation with courage to continue the struggle against the overgrown power of France. Scarcely less remarkable is his record of legislative achievement. His India Bill of 1784, his attempt to free Anglo-Irish trade from antiquated shackles, his effort to present to Parliament a palatable yet not ineffective scheme of Reform, raise him above the other law-givers of the eighteenth century in the grandeur of his aims if not in his actual achievements. By the India Bill of 1784 he reconciled the almost incompatible claims of eastern autocracy and western democracy. If he failed to carry fiscal and Parliamentary Reform, it was due less to tactical defects on his part than to prejudice and selfishness among those whom he sought to benefit.

On the other hand, his intense hopefulness often led him to overlook obstacles and to credit all men with his own high standard of intelligence and probity, a noble defect which not seldom marred his diplomatic and military arrangements during the Great War. At no point have I slurred over his mistakes, his diffusion of effort over too large an area of conflict, and his perhaps undue trust in doubtful allies. But, even so, as I have shown, a careful examination of all the available evidence generally reveals the reasons for his confidence; and failures due to this cause are far less disastrous, because less dispiriting to the nation, than those which are the outcome of sluggishness or cowardice. Of those unpardonable sins Pitt has never been accused even by his severest critics. After the repulse of his pacific overtures by the French Directory in September 1797 his attitude was one almost of defiance, witness his curt rejection of similar offers by Bonaparte early in 1800, which may be pronounced the gravest defect of his diplomatic career.

In that age the action of statesmen was often dilatory; and we must admit that in regard to the Act of Union with Ireland Pitt's procedure was halting and ineffective, so that finally he was driven to use corrupt means to force through the corrupt Irish Parliament a measure which in the autumn of 1798 would have been accepted thankfully by the dominant caste. His Bill of 1797 for the relief of the poor and his Land Tax Commutation Act of 1798 are examples of improvident legislation. But from a leader overburdened with the details of war and diplomacy we should not expect the keen foresight, the minute care as to details, which distinguished Gladstone. To compare the achievements of a statesman hard pressed by the problems of the Revolutionary Era with those of a peaceful age when the standard of legislative effort had been greatly raised is unfair; and the criticism of Pitt by a distinguished historian evinces partiality towards the Victorian statesman rather than an adequate appreciation of the difficulties besetting a Minister of George III in those times of turmoil.[1] It is true that Pitt did not inaugurate Factory legislation; that was the work of the Addington Cabinet in 1802; he did not link his name with the efforts of Romilly and others for the reform of the brutal Penal Code; and he did little for art and literature; but neither the personality of George nor the state of the national finances favoured the rise of a Maecenas.

Concentration of effort on political and diplomatic questions was the alpha and omega of Pitt's creed. The terrible pressure of events forbade his looking far ahead or far afield; he marched straight onward, hoping by his untiring efforts first to restore national prosperity and thereafter to secure a peace which would inaugurate a brighter future. His overtaxed strength collapsed when the strain was most tense; and his life therefore figures as a torso, which should not be criticized as if it were the perfect statue. Yet, as moral grandeur is always inspiring, Pitt's efforts were finally to be crowned with success by the statesmen who had found wisdom in his teaching, inspiration in his quenchless hope, enthusiasm in his all-absorbing love of country. An egoist never founds a school of the prophets. But Pitt, who

> Spurn'd at the sordid lust of pelf
> And served his Albion for herself,

trained and inspired a band of devoted disciples such as no other leader of the eighteenth century left behind him. Some were unimaginative plodders, as Perceval; others were capable administrators and shrewd diplomatists, as Castlereagh; to one alone was vouchsafed the fire of genius, the sympathetic insight, the soaring ambition held in check by overmastering patriotism, which were commingled in the personality of the master; and Canning afterwards declared that he buried his political allegiance in the grave of Pitt. It was granted to these men to labour on in the cause for which he gave his life, and finally, in the years 1814-15, to bring back France to her old frontiers by arrangements which he clearly outlined in the years 1798 and 1805. Of the numerous annexations and changes of boundaries effected by Napoleon, only one, the Valtelline, was destined to survive. But Europe after Waterloo testified alike to the sagacity and the limitations of the mind of William Pitt.

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[1] Lord Acton, "Letters to Mary Gladstone," 45, 46, 56.

STATISTICS OF THE YEARS 1792—1801

N.B.—The figures under the heading "money borrowed" are taken from the official statistics presented by the Rt. Hon. George Rose, "Brief Examination into the Increase of the Revenue, Commerce and Navigation of Great Britain" (London, 1806), p. 16. The total statistics are given in round numbers.

YEAR.	PERMANENT TAXES.	IMPORTS.	EXPORTS.	NAVY.	ARMY.	MONEY BORROWED.
1792	14,284,000	19,659,000	24,465,000	1,985,000	1,819,000	—
1793	13,941,000	19,256,000	19,676,000	3,971,000	3,993,000	4,500,000
1794	13,858,000	22,288,000	25,111,000	5,525,000	6,641,000	12,907,000
1795	13,557,000	22,736,000	25,036,000	6,315,000	11,610,000	19,490,000
1796	14,292,000	23,187,000	28,025,000	11,883,000	14,911,000	29,726,000
1797	13,332,000	21,013,000	26,315,000	13,033,000	15,488,000	44,029,000
1798	14,275,000	27,857,000	30,289,000	13,449,000	12,852,000	15,000,000
1799	15,727,000	26,837,000	33,640,000	13,642,000	11,840,000	15,500,000
1800	14,238,000	30,570,000	38,119,000	13,619,000	11,941,000	18,500,000
1801	14,641,000	32,795,000	37,786,000	15,857,000	12,117,000	25,500,000

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